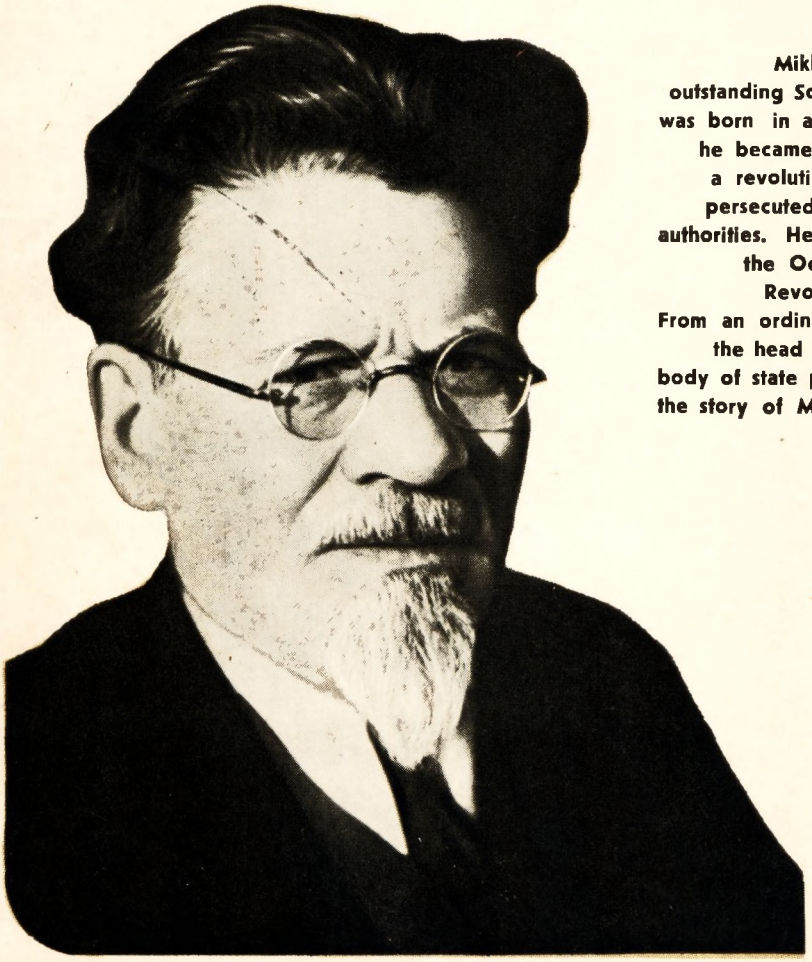
Mikhail Kalinin

A. DEMENTYEV, A. PYANOV



Mikhail Kalinin, an outstanding Soviet statesman, was born in a village, later he became a worker and a revolutionary and was persecuted by the tsarist authorities. He took part in the October Socialist Revolution of 1917. From an ordinary worker to the head of the supreme body of state power—such is the story of Mikhail Kalinin's life.

A. Dementyev, A. Pyanov

Mikhail Kalinin

(Commemorating the centenary of his birth)

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is about the life and work of Mikhail Kalinin (1875-1946), a revolutionary and prominent leader of the Communist Party and the Soviet state. For over 25 years Kalinin headed the supreme body of state power in the country; he was, first, Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and from 1922, when the Soviet Union was formed, Chairman of the USSR Central Executive Committee.

When the new USSR Constitution was adopted in 1936 Kalinin was elected deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet; the first sitting of the USSR Supreme Soviet elected him Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Kalinin filled this office almost to his last day.

A. Dementyev and A. Pyanov are authors of many books and articles about Mikhail Kalinin.

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I. A Peasant Boy

If you look at a map of Russia, you will find the town of Kalinin and Kalinin Region (Tver Guberniya in pre-revolutionary Russia) almost in the center of the European part of the country, not far from Moscow. It is 160 kilometers from Moscow and slightly more than 500 kilometers from Leningrad (former Petersburg).

In Verkhnyaya Troitsa

Mikhail Kalinin was born on November 19, 1875 into a peasant family living at Verkhnyaya Troitsa, a small and dreamy hamlet of Tver Guberniya snuggled on a picturesque bank of the Medveditsa River.

It was a typical old Russian hamlet. The first thing to strike the newcomer was the poverty of the villagers. About half or twenty-two of its forty-seven families could not grow enough on their meager plots to see themselves through the winter. Only thirty families at the most owned a cow or a horse.

To make ends meet the menfolk, the fathers and older sons, had to take seasonal jobs in the nearby towns of Tver or Kashin, or even Moscow and cities farther away. The hardest work was usually the lot of these "otkhodniks" (seasonal workers). If a peasant could carpenter he was considered a lucky fellow who had a real profession.

Ivan Kalinin, Mikhail's father, was one of the poorer villagers. All he owned was a tiny plot of infertile land, a hut with three windows and a shabby roof, and an old horse he had inherited from his father. No one could scratch out a living on that, no matter how hard he worked. Ivan Kalinin had to leave hearth and home and spend all winter working in town. Fortunately he was not bad at carpentering.

Recalling his childhood years, Mikhail Kalinin was later to say: "My father was away carpentering all the time and my mother ran the place."

And he was his mother's willing helper.

So it was that Mikhail Kalinin came early in life to share the hardships of a poor peasant's life and to understand the labor that went into a crust of bread. Even as a child he pitied his mother as she went about her endless chores, tidying the house, sewing, feeding the children, planting and weeding the kitchen garden, working the strip of land allotted them. While she hurried from task to task, he looked after the smaller children. He was only six when his mother began to leave his little sisters and brothers in his care so that she could work her strip, and he was set to weeding, taking in the cucumbers and digging up the potatoes. Then, when he was a little bigger, he planted the potatoes, and retted, layed out, pulled and combed the flax and cropped the rye, and soon he was taking on new jobs and learning to plough and thresh.

Summer is fine in those parts. The gold of the fields is offset by the green of the woods ringing with the gay chatter of birds. Here and there the blue ribbons of shallow streams overgrown with shrubs trace winding paths. And over it all glow an azure sky and a bright sun.

The Medveditsa flanked the village, and the Kalinin hut stood right on its bank. There were many ways a boy could enjoy himself in such a setting, but Mikhail rarely had time even to play with the other children. "We thought it a great lark just to walk in the woods or fields," he remembered as a grown man. "Our chores left us little time for such pleasures."

When and if he did find himself in the woods, he listened eagerly to the whispering of the branches, observed the hidden life of the forest's numerous inhabitants, climbed the trees, ran races with his friends.

The neighbors looked up to his father, Ivan Kalinin, as a man who was experienced and world-wise; he had served in the army, and he lived and worked in town for several months every year. By their standards and compared to the other villagers he seemed a man of considerable knowledge. From his observations of the life of his fellow villagers and towns folk, Ivan Kalinin concluded that those who were educated had it better. So he wanted at least his eldest son, Mikhail, to learn to read and write.

Learning to Read

There were no schools in either Verkhnyaya Troitsa or any of the nearby hamlets. But there was an old peasant, an ex-soldier, who agreed to teach the village children in winter to read for a small fee plus his dinners, which the parents took turns providing. Mikhail became his pupil.

Little as the teacher knew, by the spring Mikhail had learned the alphabet and could put the letters together to form words. The next winter he would begin to read and maybe even write a little. And there his "education" might have ended... were it not for chance.

One summer day Mikhail met two boys younger than himself in the forest. Their names were Sasha and Mitya, and they lived on the Tetkovo estate, where their parents had a fine summer house. Mikhail had seen the house and regarded it with curiosity. It was different from the other houses thereabouts. Though built of logs like the peasants' huts, it was adorned with strange balconies and towers and had many windows on all sides. It might have been a church or a fairy home. During the winter the windows were boarded up and it stood silent and glum. In the summer it came to life again.

The house and estate were the property of an important Petersburg official serving in the Railway Ministry, the civilian General Mordukhai-Boltovsky. Every summer he descended upon the place with his family and servants, including a cook, a gardener, and an army of housemaids.

Sasha and Mitya were the general's sons and the oldest of his six children.

The boys soon became friends, and Mikhail was invited to their house. He was a little afraid of the general, who seemed stern and pompous, but he liked his friends' mother, who was gracious and kind. All the villagers knew the general's wife as a person who tried to help the peasants, visited their homes, administered to the sick and gave them medicines.

Members of the Mordukhai-Boltovsky family liked Mikhail Kalinin too. Composed, neat, well put-together, with a cap of light brown hair, a clear high forehead and fine features, he could not but dispose others in his favor. His gaze under

furrowed brows was searching but by no means servile.

The Rural School

The general was a trustee of a *Zemstvo* (rural) school situated 12 kilometers from Verkhnyaya Troitsa in the large rural center of Yakovlevskoye. Knowing how eager Mikhail was to study, his friends persuaded their father to have him accepted there.

Mikhail was elated. "I plunged into my studies as a starving man plunges into his food," he recalled. "By my first Christmas I had finished two classes, the first and semi-middle, and entered the middle class." *

His teacher at the Yakovlevskoye school was a well-educated, kind and clever woman by the name of Anna Bobrova. On his first day there Kalinin felt clumsy and constrained. He had never been out of his native village before; perhaps he was even ashamed of his clothes, for the other boys were wearing good suits and sturdy leather shoes, while his feet were clad in *chuny*, woven of lengths of rope by his father. Of course, he did his best to hide his embarrassment, and after the first lesson with his new teacher he regained his composure. She was considerate, and she never raised her voice or shouted at the pupils, and her presentation was clear and understandable—not like that of the retired soldier at Verkhnyaya Troitsa.

All his life Mikhail Kalinin remembered his first teacher, Anna Bobrova, with respect and warm gratitude. Many years later, when he was the head of the highest governing body of the Soviet state, he would pay his old teacher a visit and take her in his arms.

Anna Bobrova immediately singled out Mikhail Kalinin among the pupils, sensing his quick intelligence, his passionate desire to study, his independence. In no time he had mastered the rules of reading. Learning to write was harder. The hands that were used to the laborious toil of the peasant could not at first cope with a slender pen. Mikhail spent hours patiently writing and rewriting every letter of the alphabet. His persistence and determination to achieve his goal won out. He began to write quickly and well.

Persistence, will power, patience—how many times in the course of his long and turbulent life did those innate qualities help Kalinin to overcome all difficulties and accomplish his tasks, and so to the end of his days.

Looking ahead, we might add that late in life Kalinin was to resume the task of perfecting his handwriting. He always wrote his own speeches and articles in his own hand. When his eyesight began to fail him and glasses were no longer a help in making out his very close and not very legible lines, he taught himself to write in big, clear letters.

The Yakovlevskoye school was a four-year school, but Mikhail Kalinin was an avid scholar and applied himself so conscientiously to his studies that he finished it in two years. He earned the praise of a member of the School Board who was present at his examinations: "There's a boy with a head on his shoulders!"

In those two years at school, in addition to completing the study program, he also managed to read every volume in the school library and all the books his teacher lent him. Thanks to her, he made the acquaintance of the great Russian writers Gavriil Derzhavin and Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol and Nikolai Nekrassov, and of the distinguished Russian educator Konstantin Ushinsky (1824–1870).

* Corresponding to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades.

At the Top of His Class

It was the year 1887. Mikhail's father had just brought him to the village of Yakovlevskoye, a short distance from the town of Kimry in Tver Guberniya. Now he was standing before the embodiment of a dream—a schoolhouse. It did not exactly resemble his dream schoolhouse, which he had pictured in his imagination as a stately building with columns, something like the Mordukhai-Boltovskys' Tetkovo house. Still, his heart leaped at the sight of the school where he was about to begin his studies in earnest.

The following morning he set out for school at the break of day.

"Why so early?" grumbled the watchwoman. She opened the door to the classroom and let him in.

Mikhail looked around the room, taking in the wide windows, the long tables on which stood ink-pots, the blackboard, the pictures on the walls.

What would it be like studying in a real school?

He heard the outside door banging and feet shuffling in the vestibule, and looked up in anticipation. The school had suddenly come to life and rang with the laughing voices of children. A gang of little boys and one chubby red-cheeked girl swept into the room. On seeing him, she asked loudly:

"You're a new pupil, aren't you? Where do you come from?"

"From Verkhnyaya Troitsa. I'm Mikhail Kalinin."

"And I'm Luba. You may sit next to me."

She drew Mikhail to a seat at the table.

"I'm not alone," he protested. "There are two other boys from our village—Vasya and Pavel. They should be here any minute. . ."

"There's room for them too."

Luba could not keep her tongue still:

"We have a lovely teacher. She's very smart, clever and nice. She comes from the city. You don't believe it? Well, you'll see. . ."

Mikhail nodded his head in agreement.

The bell rang, ushering in another school day. The children took their seats at the tables. Mikhail searched the room for his village friends. Vasya and Pavel had plunked themselves on two chairs nearby and were staring unblinkingly at the door.

It opened and the teacher came in. How young and pretty she was! Her walk to school had brought a flush to her cheeks. She stood at her table in a neat white blouse and smiled a soft greeting to her class.

"Good-morning, children!"

Her pupils sprang to their feet and returned her greeting.

The teacher looked at the children fondly.

"We've new pupils!" cried the irrepressible Luba.

The teacher noticed Mikhail.

"So you're a new pupil?"

"Yes, and so are Pavel and Vasya there."

"And what is your name?"

"I'm Mikhail . . . Kalinin."

The thin, pale boy who gave his name as Mikhail looked all the thinner and paler for sitting next to the chubby, red-cheeked Luba Golovina. He was poorly dressed, though neat and clean. His intelligent blue eyes returned her gaze guardedly, but she sensed a promise in them. She liked his smile too, a sweet and rather lost smile, as if he could not believe what was happening to him.

Indeed, Mikhail Kalinin could not believe that it was all true, that he was really sitting in a classroom, and that the teacher was writing his name in her re-

gister. How he had longed for this day, and envied the Mordukhai-Boltovksy boys when they had read aloud to him from interesting books or told him about the school they attended, a "Gymnasium."

His mood was not lost on the teacher. Something of his joy seemed to go out to her.

Then Anna Bobrova turned to Pavel and Vasya, very different boys from Mikhail, the former a laughing, mischievous-looking lad, the latter—silent and phlegmatic.

"You three will have to catch up with the rest of the class," she said. "You have missed the beginning of our studies."

"That's alright," laughed Pavel, speaking for all three.

One day two weeks later the teacher decided to acquaint the children with the Russian poets. On her desk lay the poems of Pushkin and Tiutchev. But first she wanted to hear from the children: "Do any of you like poetry?"

Mikhail raised his hand.

"Come up to the front of the class, Mikhail, and tell us what poems you know."

He stepped forward and the teacher noticed his "chuny", made of rope. "How can he get through the winter frosts in those?" she wondered. To him she said:

"What poem can you recite for us?"

"Nekrassov's 'The Uncut Field'."

From that day on the teacher began to give Mikhail books to read, and reading became his hobby. Going off alone to some shady spot, he would read and then stretch out on his back and think about the books he had read. The next morning he would besiege the teacher with questions. "What would have happened if Stepan Razin had defeated all the boyars?" or "Has anyone ever seen God?"

She liked to listen to him as he talked about the books he had read. Once he returned the book "The Lives of Saints" with these words:

"What bores they were, those saints. I know all about them now and the last thing I want to be is a saint, living in a desert or cave and praying all the time, while other people do their work for them. . ."

Anna Bobrova burst out laughing.

"It's true," cried Mikhail hotly. "Have you ever watched the peasants taking in the harvest? Working from dawn to dark without a minute's rest?"

What he said was true. The teacher knew that the Kalinin family was large and that everyone in the family down to the small children worked hard and still endured hunger and need.

She often worried about Mikhail's future. As she had surmised, he proved a very capable scholar. His mind grasped new ideas in a flash. He made such rapid strides within a few months that by mid-winter he was ready to do the tasks she set the second grade.

"What will he do when he finishes our school?" she asked herself.

One day his father, Ivan Kalinin, a timid, sickly man, stopped in to see her on his way through Kimry.

"Your son is very bright," she told him. "I'm confident that he can finish our school in two years instead of four. He must continue his education."

"Learning is not for such as us, who can barely keep body and soul together. It's best that Mikhail finish school quickly and go to work on some estate. We need his help."

The father's words rang in Anna Bobrova's ears for a long time to come.

Meanwhile Mikhail had outstripped all the other pupils. He was the only child who came in with the correct answer the morning after she assigned them a difficult problem to solve at home, a problem that was harder than the examples they had done together in the classroom.

"Go to the blackboard, Mikhail, and show us how you did it."

"I didn't catch on to it right away. I sat over it all evening, until it was time to go to bed. Then in the middle of the night I woke up suddenly with the answer! Honestly, that's how it was... I went at it differently and got the total first..." Here Mikhail began to write a number on the blackboard. "...and then I subtracted..."

"Very good, Mikhail," said the teacher, putting a "5" down beside his name in her record, and telling herself for the nth time that he was her most earnest and intelligent pupil, besides being a very likable and good-natured boy who was always thoughtful of others.

Her mind went back to the time when he had come running into the room looking frightened and on the verge of tears.

"What's wrong, Misha?" she had asked, using the diminutive of his name. "Has somebody hurt you?"

"I've been thrown out of the house. I tried to stop the man where I room from beating his wife, and he told me to get out for good."

What had impressed itself then on Anna Bobrova was that Mikhail seemed to feel most keenly about the wrong being done the woman rather than himself. He hated injustice. At home his parents respected each other and lived peaceably together.

When Mikhail was calmed she accompanied him to the home of the Kuptsovs where her pupil roomed and rebuked the husband. The latter was not a bad man, but poverty had drained him of all good feeling and made him bitter; he vented his bitterness on his near ones. He never raised his hand against his wife after that day, and the incident was forgotten.

Before winter was well under way, Anna Bobrova carried out a plan she had been nursing ever since she first saw Mikhail's "chuny". She bought him a pair of warm felt boots and a winter shirt and belt. He looked taken aback and yet pleased when his teacher placed the gifts in his hand and ruffled his hair affectionately.

"They're for you," she said. "Wear them in good health."

"For me? Really? But why?"

"Because you are a good boy. Because I don't want you to freeze on Saturdays when you walk home to your village."

"Thank you," said Mikhail, turning away to hide his joy.

The next day he stood at the threshold of the Kalinin hut and shouted happily to his mother:

"Ma, look, I've got felt boots. And a warm shirt!"

His mother stared at the boots on his feet and brushed away a tear with the edge of her apron.

"Where did you ever get them, Mikhail?"

"My teacher gave them to me."

"God bless her for the good soul she is," cried his mother.

On Monday Mikhail took advantage of his teacher's brief absence from the room to place a small bundle on her table. He pictured her to himself biting into his mother's pickled apples, a delicacy she relished, and that brought a happy smile to his lips.

The two years ended, and the day came for Mikhail to take his final examinations. His teacher's prophecy had come true. He had finished the school in two winters instead of four, and stood at the top of his class, meriting a certificate of honor. That was the happiest and yet the saddest day of his childhood. Good-bye, happy school days; good-bye, dear teacher! They were slipping into the past, and the future boded only a life of drudgery.

The other pupils had gone home, but Mikhail Kalinin still lingered at the window pressing his certificate of honor to his breast and looking out into the street.

His teacher came up to him and touched his elbow. He turned around and she saw that he had been crying.

"What is it, Misha?" she asked.

"What am I to do now?" was all he could say, his body shaking with sobs.

She tried to comfort him: "Everything will turn out for the best, you'll see, Misha..." But to herself she said: "And what, indeed, is there in store for him? What? He will go back to the village and be put into domestic service–and then, good-bye to all hopes and books."

A "House Boy"

While still at school, Mikhail had begun to think anxiously about the future. He wanted to study, but not even a certificate of honor could open the doors of other institutions of learning to the son of a peasant.

He had to earn a living, for his family was in great need. It was a drought year and the peasants of Verkhnyaya Troitsa faced the prospect of famine in the coming winter.

For want of anything better to do, he entered General Mordukhai-Boltovsky's employ as a "house boy". He was fourteen years old then.

Service in the general's household was not very taxing. In Petersburg his duties consisted in polishing the boots and brushing the boys' suits in the morning, running to the baker's for fresh buns, waking Mitya and Sasha, tidying their room after they had left for the Gymnasium, and taking the dog out for a walk. The rest of the day was his to do with as he pleased. Mostly he passed the time reading.

The general had a good library and Mikhail spent hours there every day. His employers were kind to him, and far from objecting to his use of the library, they encouraged his thirst for learning and suggested what to read. The two young masters sometimes gave him lessons in history, geography and arithmetic.

To be sure, his reading was unsystematic; each of his advisers recommended any book he happened to like. In spite of that, Mikhail gained a substantial knowledge of Russian classical literature. He enjoyed the works of Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov and Turgenev and they stimulated his thinking. As for the poems of Nekrassov, with their touching pictures of the poverty and misery of the plain people, Mikhail's heart throbbed as he read them, for they expressed his own feelings and described the life of his fellow villagers and the poor people he saw every day on the streets of Petersburg.

At first his existence in that big city of brick and stone depressed the boy who loved the wide open spaces and was accustomed to the simple human relations of the countryside and the peasant's humble toil. He was cowed by the sight of uniforms studded with bright brass buttons. But soon, for he was an observant lad, he got his bearings and began to feel at home among the big stone buildings, compared to which the village church, the only stone building he had ever seen before, seemed tiny.

Yet he was most at home not in the center of the city, where the well-dressed and carefree crowds gathered, but off at the edges of town and on its quiet side streets. Although life even there was differently ordered than in Verkhnyaya Troitsa, he was conscious of an elusive bond between the shabbily dressed woman carrying a heavy basket of fresh laundry and his own overworked mother, while the tired worker smelling of smoke and oil brought back memories of his father. After a year or two in the city, he was able to define that bond. What his fellow villagers and the dwellers of the poor side streets of Petersburg had in common was hard work and continual

worry about the next day's crust of bread.

In the summertime the general's family went to the Tetkovo estate, and Mikhail was near his parents again and could help them with the farm work. It saddened him to see how quickly they had aged in his absence. Poverty was wearing them down and robbing them of hope.

His duties at Tetkovo were even lighter than in Petersburg—not that he had much leisure for himself. He had to accompany Sasha and Mitya on their walks in the woods and share in their games; his mistress did not burden the sturdy, intelligent and handy peasant boy with other chores because she felt that her sons were safest in his company.

Still, he managed to read a little in the leisure allowed him, and he discussed all kinds of questions with the boys in his charge: "Is there a god?" and "What do people mean when they say the world is unknowable?" Or, again, he would ask them: "Was Pugachev a just man?"

When summer ended, the Mordukhai-Boltovskys returned to Petersburg, taking Mikhail with them. He resumed those wonderful hours of quiet reading in the library which had become a vital need. Volume after volume, he devoured the encyclopedias of Brockhaus and Efron and Brehm's *Illustriertes Tierleben (Life of Animals).* He poured over the difficult essays of the English philosopher John Stuart Mill, whose *Considerations on Representative Government* and *On Liberty* offered much food for thought and whetted his appetite for more literature on the subject.

"The Polar Star"

Once when he was browsing in the library, Mikhail came upon a dusty volume entitled *The Polar Star* on a remote upper shelf. The name of its publisher, Alexander Herzen, meant nothing to him. He began to turn the unfamiliar pages, and he did not leave his seat on the top rung of the ladder on which he was ensconced for many another hour. The very name of the printshop—"Free Russian Press"—and the place where that was situated—London—were intriguing. But even more unexpected and exciting was the content of its pages! He studied the photographs of the leaders of the Decembrist Uprising of 1825 who had been executed by order of the tsar; he read accounts of the Decembrists' activities and Alexander Pushkin's famous poem to them which was banned in Russia.

The Polar Star became the inseparable companion of his days and broadened the sphere of his interests. Here, in Petersburg, men had lived not long ago who had made it their purpose to overthrow the tsar and set up a new form of government which would give the people a better life. They were executed or exiled to Siberia and the Caucasus. But there must be men even now who shared the ideas of Alexander Bestuzhev, Kondrati Ryleyev and the other Decembrists, who felt as Alexander Herzen did.

So Mikhail began to search the shelves for other books that would answer the questions piling up in his head. That was how he came upon the writings of a prominent Russian publicist of that day, the well-known revolutionary-democrat author and public figure Nikolai Shelgunov (1824-1891).

Before long he was to witness a giant demonstration by the proletariat of Petersburg as they escorted Nikolai Shelgunov on his last journey. He saw workers from the Putilov Plant, the Arsenal, the ship-building wharves marching solemnly, in silent grief, behind the bier. Over their heads for all to see they carried a huge wreath of oak leaves. A streamer waved in the breeze bearing the message: "To N. V. Shelgunov, who pointed the

road to liberty and fraternity, from the workers of Petersburg".

An aura of strength emanated from that united procession; unbending will was written on the grim faces of the workers who had poured out of their factories and shops in greasy overalls to join the cortege. Mikhail felt sorry that he was not a part of that mighty force but a mere spectator.

He was surprised that the police, usually in such a hurry to break up any crowd, especially one made up of workers, were moving meekly behind the funeral procession and making no attempt to disperse it.

"I suppose nothing would come of it if they did try to disperse a crowd like this," it dawned on him. "These men can't be intimidated!" And following that he had another flash of inspiration which made him shiver with excitement: "That means they're afraid–that's why they're not giving chase." That was a new thought and one he would remember. It reminded him of the daring sentiments expressed in the pages of *The Polar Star.*

After that day Mikhail began to read the books of Shelgunov with great interest. Here was a man who spoke the truth about everyday life. Brehm and the essays of John Stuart Mill were laid aside and forgotten.

The writings of Nikolai Shelgunov opened the doors still wider to a new world, the world of struggle between progress and ignorance, freedom and oppression. They led him inevitably to the works of the great Russian revolutionary democrats, to the literary critic and publicist Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848), to the critic and philosopher Dmitri Pissarev (1840-1868), and to Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-1889), whose novel *What Is to Be Done?* played an enormous role in the education of many generations of Russian revolutionaries.

Somewhat earlier, on leafing through *The Polar Star,* Mikhail had come upon the name of the philosopher, author and publicist Alexander Herzen (1812-1870). Now he read and reread Herzen's book about contemporary Russian society *My Past and Thoughts.*

Mikhail Kalinin lived with the Mordukhai-Boltovsky family for four years. They were formative years during which he learned much and began to think for himself. His 18th birthday was approaching–time to decide about the future and choose his road in life. He kept thinking about the grim and strong men he had seen marching in the funeral procession and the factories where they worked. Probably among them he would find people who shared the ideas of Herzen, the Decembrists and their sympathizers.

Mikhail Kalinin's desire to identify himself with the broader life of struggle grew within him. He knew now that the life of a servant was not for him. Neither could there be any question of his going back to the village, where there was not enough land to go around. He no longer wanted to leave Petersburg, for he had learned to love it.

It was not at all easy to get a factory job.

But Mikhail had definitely decided to become a worker.

II. The Beginning of the Road

Mikhail Kalinin was 18 when he parted with the Mordukhai-Boltovsky family. One cloudy autumn morning in 1893 he joined a crowd of workers for the first time and with them entered the grounds of the "Stary Arsenal" Bullet Factory in Petersburg.

A new and very important stage was beginning in the life of the young man who was destined to become a prominent revolutionary and Party worker, and then a leading public figure and Soviet statesman. He was embarking on his new road confidently and firmly, never to leave it again.

Russia at the Close of the 19th Century

The years when Mikhail Kalinin went to school, grew to manhood and chose his path in life were years of great change in Russia.

After the abolition of serfdom in 1861, industry began to develop quite rapidly in Russia. The number of factories and mills increased more than twofold between 1866 and 1890 (from 2,500-3,000 to 6,000). Machinery gradually replaced hand labor. Plants appeared employing thousands of machine operators, huge enterprises for those days. Railway lines increased more than sevenfold, from 4,000 to 29,000 kilometers. The towns grew in size, new industrial areas came into being.

Feudal Russia had two basic classes, the landowners and the peasantry. With the rise and growth of large-scale capitalist industrial production, the bourgeoisie and the working class entered the arena of social life. In 1890 there were 1,432,000 workers or twice as many as in 1865 manning only the large factories and mills, the mining industry and railways. By the end of the 19th century, Russia had a total of about 10 million wage earners in industry, the railways, agriculture, the building and lumber trades, etc.

Capitalism was developing in the countryside as well as in the towns. From a subsistence economy producing mainly for the needs of the peasants themselves, agriculture was increasingly turning into a commercial enterprise producing more for sale and thus becoming more subordinate to the demands of the market. Competition was mounting and the peasantry breaking up into the rich kulaks and ever greater numbers of poor peasants. Agricultural production began to be increasingly concentrated in the hands of the rich peasants. Out of a total of 10,000,000 peasant households at the end of the 19th century, about 6,500,000 belonged to the poor peasants, 2,000,000 to the middle peasants, and 1,500,000 to the kulaks.

The countryside was often plagued by crop failures and famines. Some forty million peasants were affected by the terrible famine of 1891. Need obliged the tillers of the soil to seek additional earnings outside of their villages. By the late 'nineties, between five and six million men were leaving the villages annu-

ally to work in the towns. Many of them settled there permanently, becoming factory workers.

The peasants' life was hard enough in the countryside, but poverty and back-breaking toil also awaited them in the towns. The working day was 12 and 13 hours, and as much as 15 and 16 hours in the textile mills. There was no labor protection of any kind, and wages were barely enough to sustain a meager diet. The employers exacted fines right and left; fines often consumed a third and even two-fifths of the worker's wages. Most of the workers lived in factory barracks where the common sleeping quarters were equipped with double or triple tiers of wooden shelves which served as beds. Three and four families were huddled into one small room. The hard work and terrible living conditions caused widespread sickness and led to the rapid emaciation and death of the workers. The infant mortality rate was appalling.

But in spite of the growth of industry and increase in the number of workers, Russia remained an economically backward agricultural country. According to the census of 1897, there were 125,600,000 people living in Russia at that time. The bulk of the population consisted of peasants, and two-thirds of them were poor peasants. The workers and their families made up about a fifth of the population. The well-to-do kulaks, owners of small businesses, bourgeois intellectuals and civil servants accounted for about another fifth. Two per cent of the population came from the big factory and land owners and top officialdom.

Thus the workers and poor and middle peasants made up about four-fifths of the population. All of them were exploited and oppressed by the owners of the factories and the large landed estates. The impoverished and enslaved working people of the towns and villages represented a huge revolutionary force.

Describing the processes that were taking place in Russia at the end of the 19th century, Lenin wrote:

"Capitalist Russia was advancing to replace feudal Russia. The settled, downtrodden serf peasant who stuck firmly to his village, had implicit faith in the priests and stood in awe of the 'authorities' was gradually giving way to a new generation of peasants, peasants who had worked as seasonal laborers in the cities and had learned something from their bitter experience of a life of wandering and wage-labor. The number of workers in the big towns, in the factories, was constantly on the increase. Gradually the workers began to form associations for their common struggle against the capitalists and the government. By waging this struggle the Russian working class helped the peasant millions to rise, straighten their backs and cast off serf habits."

At "Stary Arsenal"

Such was the situation in the country when young Mikhail Kalinin went to work at "Stary Arsenal". An experienced operator named Ivan Kuleshov began to teach him the trade of the turner. At first he was not taught much, to be sure, but was put to running errands for his teacher, bringing him instruments and handing him his cutting tools and parts.

One can get an idea of the working conditions then from Kalinin's recollections: "When I started out at the factory people worked from 6:30 in the morning until 6 in the evening, with an hour and a half off for lunch. There were mills where the workers began at 5 in the morning and finished at 8 in the evening, with two hours off for lunch and sup-

per... A worker's earnings were so low that they were barely enough to provide his family with a beggarly existence."

Kalinin himself earned 8 rubles a month. On that sum he had to feed and dress himself and pay his rent, besides sending something home every month to his parents in Verkhnyaya Troitsa. His parents were getting old and his father could no longer seek additional employment in town.

Although it was difficult to make ends meet, Kalinin never regretted that he had given up his comfortable life in the home of a general for work in a factory.

However, the young worker found the situation in his factory disappointing. How unlike his present comrades were the men he had seen at Shelgunov's funeral, who looked fearless, strong, self-respecting. Here he found himself surrounded by timid workers who bowed to their superiors and were afraid to open their mouths. He looked in vain for men who felt as he did; the only thing any of them seemed to care about was earning an extra kopeck.

Even after he became a skilled turner and was given a lathe to operate himself, he continued to find the atmosphere of servility oppressive. He yearned for the teeming life of a big plant where the workers did not put up with humiliation and fought for their rights.

Most of all he would have liked to work at the Putilov Plant. He had heard a great deal about the "rebellious" workers there and their ability to defend their rights. So far that was out of the question; only the most skilled workers were accepted there.

Interesting things were happening meanwhile beyond the gates of "Stary Arsenal". Vladimir Ulyanov had arrived in Petersburg the very autumn Mikhail Kalinin went to work there. A lawyer by education, he had taken a position as an assistant barrister and immediately joined in the activities of the Petersburg Social-Democrats.

The following year Vladimir Ulyanov was teaching in the workers' circles of Nevskaya Zastava, a working class district of Petersburg. Soon he formed a central workers' circle. In the spring and summer of 1894 he wrote the book *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats,* directed against the philosophy, political platform and tactics of the Narodniks. He showed that they were the mouthpiece of the wealthy strata of the countryside and were diverting the peasants and certain sections of the intelligentsia from the revolutionary struggle. Illegally published by a hectograph, the work aroused immediate interest and became popular in revolutionary circles.

And one year after that, in 1895, Vladimir Ulyanov set up a political organization which amalgamated all the Marxist circles of Petersburg—The League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class which was the embryo of a proletarian party in Russia.

Kalinin knew nothing of all that as yet. In time he would read Lenin's work and join the League of Struggle. He continued to work at "Stary Arsenal" and to dream of getting a job at the Putilov Plant.

With the help of his old teacher, Ivan Kuleshov, that dream came true. Kuleshov had left "Stary Arsenal" where he was not earning enough, to work at the Putilov Plant. He respected young Kalinin for his intelligence and familiarity with books, and when he left "Stary Arsenal" he said:

"We'll meet again."

Before long he revisited his old factory, and, standing at Kalinin's side, watched him work. Pleased with the progress Mikhail had made, he offered to take him on again as his helper at the Putilov Plant.

At the Putilov Plant

In the spring of 1896 Kalinin began to work in the Putilov Plant's cannon shop. In those years the Putilov Plant was the largest industrial enterprise in Russia. It employed 12,000 workers of all trades and produced a wide range of machinery from locomotives and railway cars to cannons and tools and even instrumental steel.

The work there was hard and much of it was done by hand. But the atmosphere was different than at "Stary Arsenal". The Putilov workers knew how to fight for their rights; thanks to that the plant had earned the reputation of being a seat of rebellion. Kalinin was glad to be working there at last.

For a while he remained under the tutelage of Ivan Kuleshov, a skilled turner who willingly handed on his know-how to Mikhail, especially when he saw how quick his pupil was to pick up the fine points of the trade. Soon the capable young turner was getting harder and harder orders to fill. His earnings increased, he could send his parents more and still have a bit for himself.

He was living now in the village of Volynkina, not far from the plant. Many of the Putilov workers as well as workers from other factories and especially the textile mills lived there. Every morning and evening men, women and children flocked in great numbers down the road to the factories and back to the village. Kalinin liked the walk with them, exchanging greetings, striking up acquaintances. Friendly and sociable, always ready to lend a comrade a helping hand, he enjoyed the trust and good-will of the other workers. He loved to be with people and exulted in the feeling of participating in common work, in the sense of being a member of the vast family of workers. And that was his way to the end of his days. He never had any trouble finding common ground with all kinds of people and they, in turn, trusted and respected him.

At the Putilov Plant he hoped to find people who were connected with the revolutionary movement and underground work, but he realized that he would have to be patient and careful. That there were such people at the plant he was soon able to ascertain.

One morning on the way to work he noticed a commotion on one of the village streets. The textile hands had gone on strike, it appeared. He could not stop long without being late to work, but he managed to overhear a word or two about leaflets and illegal meetings. On reaching the plant, he discovered a small leaflet in his pocket signed by the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.

That day he studied the faces of his fellow workers closely in the hope of discovering, if not the person who had put the leaflet in his pocket, at least the identity of those who read such leaflets. He did not succeed, of course, but that did not surprise him; neither had anybody seen him read his leaflet. He had had the good sense to read it when nobody was around. But the great thing was that there were the kind of people at the plant that he was looking for. If he did not find them, they would find him.

Shortly afterwards he enrolled in the Narva evening technical school for adult workers. Most of the students were young people, and like young people everywhere they soon made friends. It seemed that they did not confine their reading to technical literature. Ffom talk about books in general their conversation often turned to the subject that agitated so many young workers–politics.

Mikhail struck up a close friendship with one of the students in particular. His name was Anton Mitrevich. After classes they would sometimes roam the streets of the city sharing their dreams and dis-

cussing the events of the day at the plant. Mikhail proposed that they organize a workers' circle. There were many fine young workers who would be glad to join it. But that was not an easy undertaking and required more experience than they could boast.

Fellow-Thinkers

One day Mikhail took the side of the young operator of a nearby lathe in an argument with the foreman about his rate of pay. He had been watching Ivan Kushnikov, who looked like a serious and clever fellow, for some time. He did not suspect that the other worker had been watching him too, that Kushnikov was connected with the League of Struggle and was looking for helpers in organizing revolutionary work.

The argument with the foreman served to bring them together and make their attitudes clear. They became friends.

So began that moment which he had been waiting for, the moment when he joined the revolutionary underground.

The two young workers formed a revolutionary circle counting ten members. Among them were Kalinin's friends, including Anton Mitrevich, and Kushnikov's townsmen from Tula who worked at the plant.

The circle became another unit under the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class created by the young Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin. Ulyanov was in Siberia then, having been arrested in Petersburg in December 1895 and exiled. While living in the Siberian village of Shushenskoye, Lenin and other exiled members of the League of Struggle made plans for the creation of a Marxist party in Russia.

The circle at the Putilov Plant thrived. The League of Struggle sent representatives to guide it in its work and speak before the members. It was not long before Kalinin became the factual leader of the circle. It began to be called the "Kalinin circle".

His work in that circle proved an important factor in Kalinin's evolution as a revolutionary. There was a great deal until then that he did not know about the revolutionary movement; nor could he have known much about it yet. Formerly he regarded anyone who spoke out against autocratic rule as a friend of the people. Now he realized that only the Marxists, the adherents of the revolutionary theories of Marx, were the real champions of the people's interests and that only they could lead the revolutionary movement along the correct road. He accepted Marxism with all his heart.

It was in the circle that he first came to know Lenin's *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats.* A member of the League of Struggle placed a copy of it in his hand and said:

"Here is a book you must read without fail."

By then his eyes had been opened to many things. All the greater was the interest and understanding with which he now studied Lenin's book. He admired the unknown author's skill in presenting his views clearly and convincingly, and he was pleased that those views coincided with his own.

The Kalinin circle busied itself not only with the political education of its own members; it gradually extended its influence over the workers' circles at other enterprises in the factory area.

At Kalinin's suggestion and with the approval of the League of Struggle, each member of the circle organized a new circle in his own shop or at other factories in the Narvskaya Zastava and Moskovskaya Zastava districts of Petersburg. Every such circle had a representative in the Kalinin circle, which was the organizational center. As a result Mikhail Kali-

nin became the leader of the illegal revolutionary activities of two of the largest working class districts of the city.

Of course, all that consumed much of his energy and time. Kalinin devoted practically all his leisure to meetings with the workers of other shops, procuring literature, arranging discussions, maintaining contacts with the workers' circles at other factories. And dedication and discipline were not enough; one needed sound theoretical training. He had to do his reading of political literature during the night.

Their First Victory

One of the first big victories the Putilov workers scored under Kalinin's leadership was in their fight against fines.

In those days the beginning of the working day was announced by the hooting of a factory whistle. First there was a long whistle warning that it was ten minutes to starting time, and then a second, intermittent whistle which the workers had dubbed the "fine hoot". Anybody who arrived at the plant after the second whistle was fined. He had to work that day without pay.

One Saturday the second whistle was sounded five minutes instead of ten after the first. The management had decided to fleece the workers for more fines.

That evening the circle met to discuss the incident. Kalinin suggested that a strike be called on Monday, and that on Sunday the members go from house to house and stop in the pubs to make sure the workers would back the strike. His plan was adopted.

On Monday morning the members of the circle with Kalinin at their head gathered in front of the plant gates before the first whistle. By the time it blew, a large crowd of workers had gathered at the gates. Most of them remained there and did not enter the grounds after the second whistle either. Chachin, representative of the management, rushed out to speak to them, urging them to go to their shops and not start trouble.

"We shan't start work until the fines are abolished," Kalinin told him.

The men backed him up.

"We won't work! Strike!" they cried.

The plant inspector, Dreier, came out and urged the men to go to work. He said he would take up their case, but nobody believed him. Kalinin spoke again, warning him in the name of all the workers:

"If you lie to us today, we'll stop the whole plant tomorrow."

The next morning Kalinin arrived at the gates before the whistle. The workers were milling around the entrance, reading an announcement from the director of the plant that the "fine hoot" would be sounded henceforth ten minutes after the first whistle and the size of the fine be reduced from 75 to 15 kopecks.

That was indeed a victory!

His First Arrest

The struggle against the enemies of Marxism required much time, energy, and above all–knowledge. As the influence of the Kalinin circle grew, the plant began to be visited by spokesmen for the "economists", who maintained that the workers did not need politics and should only strive for economic concessions from the bosses. Then agents provocateurs were sent in to help smooth over the contradictions between the workers and bosses; many of them hid treacherously behind revolutionary phrases about cooperation and socialism. To expose all such hypocrites one had to be able to refute their arguments convincingly, in other words, to know more than

they. Mikhail Kalinin became the terror of all such "agitators".

In the spring of 1899 he and some comrades arranged a May Day celebration for the first time among the workers of the Putilov Plant. Hundreds of workers gathered in the woods and Ivan Kushnikov made a rousing speech. The police got wind of the get-together and surrounded the woods. No arrests were made, however, for the presence of the police was noticed in time, and the workers broke up into small groups, pretending to be just having a rest in the woods.

During the summer the workers in the railway car shops at the Putilov Plant learned that their wages had been cut. They were furious. Working conditions were terrible, the machinery was outworn and dangerous to operate—and still their wages were being cut! Their indignation could no longer be contained when a worker was accidentally killed in that same shop when a flange broke loose from an outworn flywheel badly in need of repairs and struck the worker dead on the spot.

After consulting the members of the circle, Kalinin decided to call another strike. He composed the text of an appeal.

"Comrade workers of the Putilov Plant," it said, "it is not enough for our greedy exploiters to economize wherever possible and impossible, as a result of which one of our workers was recently killed on the spot by a flywheel that was in disrepair but was kept working. Now they have begun to economize on our wages... Are we going to let them fleece us alive like a herd of dumb animals?.."

The appeal was secretly printed as a leaflet and on the morning of July 3rd was distributed throughout the plant. The workers agreed to go on strike.

But that evening Mikhail Kalinin and many other members of the circle were arrested by the police.

III. Son of the Party

He was arrested for the first time. Kalinin went calmly under police escort to the house of detention where he was to spend ten long months. Two years earlier, in February 1897, Vladimir Ulyanov had been sent into Siberian exile from this same jail after having spent fourteen months there.

Not a Day Wasted

When the door of his cell slammed behind him, Kalinin took in his surroundings: the bare dirty-gray walls, the small window and bars, the iron bed firmly fastened to the floor, the table and stool. He sat down at the table. If only he had a book!

The first days of enforced idleness were the hardest. And there was not a single living soul there besides himself. For a man accustomed to the company of many other people, that was the worst deprivation he could have suffered.

Books were permitted the political prisoners, and Kalinin quickly availed himself of the privilege. He was not used to wasting time; he did not want to lose a single day.

The long list he drew up included many titles he had always intended but had never had a chance to read. Now he would have plenty of leisure and would use it wisely. The guard grumbled as he staggered in with a load of heavy books for Kalinin.

During his stay in this jail, Kalinin read 160 books. One of them was the first volume of Karl Marx's *Capital.*

Until 1897, *Capital* had been banned in Russia by the tsarist censorship. But the importance of this work was obvious; its conclusions, scientifically arrived at and irrefutable, were incorporated in all courses on political economy. The censors therefore lifted the ban. They assumed that so serious a work on economics would be entirely beyond the comprehension of the wide reading public and above all the workers, and so was not dangerous. How wrong they were! Many revolutionary workers made *Capital* their handbook.

In addition to his reading, Kalinin wrote many letters. They were long letters running to ten and fifteen pages covered with his close, fine writing. They became the bane of his warders.

The latter realized that Kalinin was the most important of all the fifty-two prisoners they had taken in July 1899. The police department's report on Kalinin said: "Standing out in intellectual development among the other workers, he has exerted an extremely harmful influence on them by his vigorous propaganda and broad ties with other anti-government agitators. He has organized secret circles in the factories and mills, distributed underground literature including the proclamations of the League, and at the meetings of the factory workers has engaged in agitation and urged the workers to go on strike."

To secure an indictment, it was not enough for the prosecution to have police reports on the character of the prisoner. The prosecutor wanted the names of other revolutionary leaders and cues that would enable the police to apprehend them. All his attempts to make Kalinin talk met with stony silence. While admitting that he was a convinced Social-Democrat (a fact well known to the police), he maintained that he had acted entirely on his own and alone.

The prosecution could get nothing out of him.

In the Caucasus

Kalinin was released on April 12, 1900. He was forbidden to reside in Petersburg. Looking for another place to live, he chose Tiflis (now Tbilisi) in the Caucasus, where he knew he would find many other exiled revolutionaries.

On the way to Tiflis, he first stopped off at Verkhnyaya Troitsa to see his parents and old friends and then in Kazan in order to obtain addresses and the names of correspondents, for he was going to the Caucasus to continue the fight against tsarist autocracy and resume his revolutionary activities.

This he did the moment he set foot in Tiflis. On his third day there he addressed an illegal gathering of workers and acquainted them in great detail with the work of the Petersburg League of Struggle.

The general atmosphere in Tiflis was very tense; there had been a number of huge working class outbreaks in Georgia in 1900 provoked by the insufferable working conditions. The railway repair shop where Kalinin took a job on arriving in the city was on the verge of declaring a strike; conditions there too were terrible. The shop was not properly equipped, and the hours were long, from 12 to 14 hours a day.

Kalinin threw himself into revolutionary activities with his unfailing energy, speaking at illegal meetings, sharing the experience of Petersburg's working class struggle with his listeners, participating in the preparations for the railway workers' strike.

His activities did not escape the attention of the police. Here is an excerpt from one of many local police documents dealing with the activities of Kalinin and his comrades:

"Since July 1900, when the workers Savchenko and Kalinin organized a circle which many railway workers joined, they have held illegal gatherings in private homes, speaking there of the plight of the workers, the need to resist the government, to set up a fund for the purpose of helping striking workers. In addition, they have read all kinds of illegal publications and explained the contents to their audiences."

Spies were put on Kalinin's trail, and in September he was dismissed from his job by order of the police division of the Transcaucasian Railroad and blacklisted so that he could not find further employment in Tiflis.

He then submitted a request for permission to reside in Revel (now the city of Tallinn). That city on the Baltic Sea appealed to him because it was near Petersburg, the heart of the revolutionary movement. Vladimir Ulyanov had already returned to Petersburg, breathing new life into the revolutionary struggle.

During the night of December 22, 1900, he and Miron Savchenko were arrested and thrown into the Metekhi Dungeon. He remained there until February 1901. When he was let out he was told that he could not live in any of the university towns or industrial centers of the country. Several days later he arrived in Revel.

Revel. Estonian Translations of "Iskra"

With the help of another revolutionary who had been sent out of Petersburg about the same time, Kalinin got a job before long as a turner at the Volta Engineering Works.

It was more difficult for him to carry on revolutionary work in Revel than in Tiflis, for the simple reason that while there were many Russians living in Tiflis and most of the Georgians and Armenians working there also knew Russian, the Estonians could hardly speak it at all. But gradually a group of local workers and exiles, of whom there were a great many in Revel, gathered around Kalinin.

December 11, 1900 saw the appearance of the first issue of *Iskra*, a newspaper started by Lenin in Germany. Kalinin liked that militant publication and lost no time communicating with its editors. He agreed with Ulyanov that an organization of the supporters of *Iskra* could become the nucleus of a Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, and of course he joined in the effort to rally the workers around the newspaper.

To that end, regular contacts with Petersburg were essential, and the best way to ensure them was to work in the railway system. Kalinin managed to get a job in the railway repair shops—no easy thing for a man under police surveillance. His skill as a turner helped.

By the time Kalinin left the Volta Works there were well-organized Marxist circles functioning there. Now similar circles sprang up in the railway repair shops.

Only a limited number of copies of *Iskra* reached Revel, and few Estonians could read them. Through some friends Kalinin got hold of a hectograph, and Estonian comrades translated the most important articles in the paper which were hectographed and then distributed in leaflet form in the factories of Revel.

Arrested Again

This well-organized work was brought to a halt by a provocateur who denounced Kalinin and several of his comrades to the police. They were arrested.

That happened in January 1903. Kalinin was conducted under heavy escort to Petersburg and thrown into the same house of detention as before.

The prison regime had grown harsher. Visitors were rarely allowed and the number of books the prisoners could have was limited. Beatings became common. During the short periods of exercise in the prison yard Kalinin managed to exchange a few words with the other inmates. They agreed to stage a protest against these abuses in the form of a hunger strike.

Kresty

Kalinin did not eat anything for five whole days. When food was brought in, he got up from his bed and dumped it into the can. He was so famished that even the prison slop looked tempting. What an effort it took not to touch a piece of bread or taste a spoonful of the pearl-barley swill! But Kalinin held firm, and continued his strike. It was the only way he could voice his protest against the inhuman conditions that prevailed in this Petersburg house of detention.

Now he lay on his hard bunk, and let his mind go back over the events of his prison life.

One of the greatest hardships was the lack of books. One day Kalinin told the red-headed bully of a guard: "We're supposed to get books to read!" The guard smirked evilly and without a word of warning struck him a blow full in the face.

"You scoundrel!" was all Kalinin managed to say, when another blow hurled him against the wall.

The next thing he knew the guard was turning the key in the door and cursing loudly all the while. Kalinin staggered to his feet.

The next day at exercise, Kalinin noticed an old prisoner with a blackened eye.

"So they beat you too?" he asked.

"Yes, and how!"

"What for?"

"Nothing—and everything."

A furious shout shook the air:

"No talking there! Keep your mouths shut!"

The next time they were in the yard and Kalinin saw the same man, they nodded to each other. The old man said:

"I talked to some of the comrades. Two of them have agreed to a hunger strike."

"Where are you from?"

"The Putilov Plant. Sidor Timofeyev's the name. I've heard about you."

"Tomorrow morning we'll start a hunger strike then."

When the guard brought in his mug of tea and slice of bread, Kalinin did not get up. The food went untouched. He had a feeling that he was being watched through the peephole. Lunch was brought in and not eaten. Then, to make it easier to endure the pangs of hunger, he began to throw the food into the can.

Evidently the other three prisoners were also keeping to the hunger strike because the prison authorities seemed to be getting uneasy. An official in pince-nez came to see him, but Kalinin refused to talk to him.

The red-headed guard hated Kalinin worse than before, and if he could have had it his way he would have killed him on the spot after having broken every bone in his body. The prisoner's superiority and inner strength maddened him, but for some reason he refrained from beating him again. He vented his rage in curses.

"You four-eyed bum, will you eat or not? You'll croak if you don't!"

Kalinin lay with his face to the wall and did not reply. On the fifth day of the strike, when he was getting very weak, the guard arrived, shouting and cursing as usual, and ordered him to get up.

"To the office without your things. March, you bum!"

Kalinin clambered weakly to his feet, and, swaying dizzily, reached the corridor. He must have looked terrible, because the guard kept his distance and left him alone.

But Kalinin never got to the office. He was taken to the prison yard and driven away in the prison van for some unknown destination. He was soon to learn that he was transferred to the Kresty Penitentiary, the worst, most terrible prison in all of tsarist Russia.

The bed in the tiny and stuffy solitary cell in which he found himself was raised and fastened to the wall in the daytime to keep the prisoner from resting. No books were allowed. The food was so bad that a man incarcerated there for any length of time inevitably got tuberculosis. There was no ventilation, and the exercise period was only fifteen minutes.

During the exercise periods, Kalinin met the other prisoners. He became friendly with Grigori Monakhov, his neighbor.

One day Kalinin said to Monakhov:

"I once read a fine book when I was outside. It was called 'What Is To Be Done?' by Chernyshevsky. It's about the Russian revolutionaries."

"Tell me about it," said Grigori.

For some days after that, Kalinin's account of the novel "What Is to Be Done?" was relayed from one cell to another. Then Grigori said to him:

"The comrades are asking you to tell them about Maxim Gorky."

That evening Kalinin's low voice was heard in the silence of the prison yard as he recited lines from Gorky's poem "Song of the Stormy Petrel":

"O'er the silvery plain of the ocean, winds are gathering the storm-clouds, and between the clouds and ocean proudly wheels the Stormy Petrel, like a streak of sable lightning."

Days, and then weeks and months went by. The terrible prison conditions, and their common ideals and craving for freedom forged a bond between the inmates. Many of them began to answer the guards fearlessly and to protest loudly against the horrible prison regime.

One day the whole penitentiary went on a hunger strike, demanding that their relatives be allowed to visit them. The tsar's watchdogs had to give in. But as the prisoners' determination and strength grew, so did the blind fury of their warders, waiting for a chance to vent itself.

It all started unexpectedly. During the lunch hour, heart-rending cries were heard in the corridor. One of the men was being dragged down the stairs. He was shouting so pitifully that all the inmates sprang to the doors of their cells. Kalinin began to bang on his door with his fists.

"Stop that, you beasts! Let him go!"

"Butchers! Assassins!"

"May you be damned, murderers!"

The hobnailed boots of the guards sounded in the corridor, and then the opening of doors. The guards were bursting into the cells and beating the prisoners.

They grabbed the prisoners by the feet, dragged them over the stone floor, and stamped on them with their boots.

Now three guards stood at the open door of Kalinin's cell. He took off his spectacles and pressed his back to the wall. They knocked him down and took turns striking him. It was a monstrous sight: three big ruffians against one weak prisoner. As he lost consciousness, he could hear one of them saying over and over again:

"Take this, and that . . ."

Evidently his torturers got tired after a while, and no wonder. Kalinin was the forty-first and last of the prisoners who were beaten up that day.

Manhandled and manacled, the political prisoners were thrown into punishment cells. Some of them died of the beatings.

Kalinin was awakened by a whisper:

"Mikhail, are you alive?"

It was Grigori Monakhov, but Kalinin could hardly recognize him.

"Alive, alive. . ." He tried to bring a smile to his swollen lips."We're going to get even with them for this–and everything else. Just you wait and see!"

Back in Revel

Mikhail Kalinin had hardly recovered from the beating when he was suddenly released and sent back to Revel under strict police surveillance.

There he resumed his revolutionary activities as energetically as before. The circles he had organized were still functioning; they distributed leaflets and held meetings. Kalinin discovered that the Social-Democratic organization he had set up in Revel was also intact. That was the best compensation he could have had for all that he had gone through.

In August 1903, the Second Congress

of the RSDLP completed its work in London. It adopted a Marxist program of a revolutionary proletarian party, and acclaimed the outstanding role of *Iskra* in helping to build up such a party.

Fundamental differences were revealed at the Congress on a number of problems discussed by the delegates, between the supporters of Lenin and *Iskra* on the one hand, and opportunists of all hues on the other. The opportunists' attacks were repulsed by the Leninists. Most of the delegates also supported Lenin on the question of the governing bodies of the Party. From the time of this Congress, Lenin's supporters began to be called the Bolsheviks, and his opponents–the Mensheviks.

At the meetings of the Social-Democratic organization of Revel which, after Kalinin's return to that city, began to be held two or three times a month, he acquainted the comrades with the decisions of the Second Party Congress and Lenin's efforts to create a Marxist party in Russia.

It would have been difficult not to see the connection between the growing activity of the revolutionary forces of Revel and Kalinin's reappearance there. In March 1904 he was again arrested after being at liberty for little over six months. "At the will of His Highness, the Tsar" he was ordered to be exiled for four years to Yakutia, in Siberia. Because of the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, however, exile to Yakutia was changed by exile to the backward Olonets Guberniya (now Karelia), which thanks to its rigorous climate was known as the "sub-Petersburg Siberia".

"The End of the World"

That is what people called the sleepy little town of Povenets, in Olonets Guberniya, where Kalinin was supposed to spend the next four years. It took him and the other exiles who were conducted there on foot under an escort of armed soldiers forty-seven days to reach the place. It was a hard journey, through spring mud, cold and rain, under the whips and curses of the guards.

In Povenets Kalinin had trouble finding work. He was finally hired as a hammerer in a smithy for a miserable wage which was barely enough to keep himself alive.

He immediately engaged in revolutionary propaganda among the local inhabitants and in organizing the exiles.

Life in such a backwater, far from the heart of the revolutionary struggle, was not for Kalinin, however. He and a fellow-exile made plans to escape. First, just on a chance, they applied for official permission to pay their parents short visits. As they had little hope of receiving permission, they went on with their preparations to run away.

To their great surprise and delight, permission was granted after all, and they started their journey without delay. By cart and then the sleigh road they reached Petersburg very soon.

That city was in a turmoil after the recent events of January 9, when a peaceful demonstration of workers was fired on by tsarist troops as it reached the square adjoining the royal palace.

The tsarist government was stooping to the basest methods in order to check the revolutionary tide. Early in January 1905, when a strike started at the Putilov Plant and the workers of other factories expressed support for it, the priest Gapon, a police provocateur, led a procession of workers to the Winter Palace, the tsar's Petersburg residence. The workers trusted Gapon and marched peacefully to the palace with the aim of petitioning the tsar to defend them against the abuses of the factory owners. A volley of bullet fire was their answer. The square in front of the Winter Palace was covered with the bodies of the dead

and spattered with the blood of innocent men and women.

This act aroused widespread indignation, which the tsarist government tried to stifle by repressions. Wholesale arrests were going on in the city at the time of Kalinin's arrival. To remain there would have been dangerous. His friends advised him to go away and wait until the excitement died down.

Kalinin went home to Verkhnyaya Troitsa and lived there all that summer under police surveillance. In September he returned illegally to Petersburg.

Again in the Heart of the Struggle. And He Met Lenin

Over the summer the situation in Petersburg had changed: revolution was in the air. The year that had started with the massacre of the workers was making even those who had always stood aloof from politics think seriously about the future of Russia. As for the working class, the most active and politically mature class, it was readying itself for armed rebellion. Workers in the factories of Petersburg were secretly manufacturing weapons in preparation for the inevitable battles to come.

The events of that year piled up with mounting tension.

After the massacre of January 9, every honest Russian felt outraged.

On January 10, a general strike took place in Moscow.

On January 13, the workers of Riga went on strike.

On January 18, the Tiflis general strike sparked a wave of political strikes in the cities of the Transcaucasia.

In January 1905 alone, 440,000 workers came out on strike throughout the country.

In April 1905, the Third Party Congress convened in London. Under the leadership of Lenin it considered the basic aspects of the developing revolutionary situation and defined the tasks of the proletariat as the guiding force of the revolution.

The Congress mapped out a course of action, recognizing the organization of an armed uprising as the main and most pressing task of the Party and the working class.

On May 1, 1905, political strikes were held in almost 200 Russian cities under the slogan of "Down with the autocracy!"

By February 1905, peasant disturbances were sweeping the farming areas of the Orel, Voronezh and Kursk guberniyas as well as the Volga, Transcaucasia and Baltic regions.

In May a strike took place in Ivanovo-Voznesensk which lasted for 72 days Before it had ended, it had set up Soviets of Workers' Representatives, the prototype of the Soviets of Working People's Deputies which are the governing bodies of the USSR today.

In June a mutiny broke out on the battleship *Potemkin.* Although it was put down, its very occurrence was of tremendous significance as the first attempt at revolutionary action by the armed forces of the tsarist government. In the summer and autumn of 1905, dozens of revolutionary acts erupted in the army and navy.

The tsarist government was alarmed by the scale of the revolutionary upsurge and began to look for a way out. Peace was hastily concluded with Japan, ending the war which had started in January 1904.

In October the tsar issued a manifesto on the convocation of the State Duma. That was nothing but an attempt to hoodwink the people, check the revolutionary tide and create the appearance of representative government by the people. Actually the Duma was set up as an ad-

visory body under the tsar, with only landowners, capitalists and a small number of rich peasants sitting in it.

Such was the situation in the country and in Petersburg when Kalinin came back to the city after his stay in the village of his birth. The manifesto on the Duma was followed by the granting of amnesties to political prisoners. That was fine for Kalinin: he was no longer in danger of being sent back to Povenets. He went to the Putilov Plant where he had worked before and got a job as a turner again.

There he found to his great satisfaction that the political awareness of the workers had grown tremendously in the six years of his absence. They immediately saw through the tsar's manifesto, for instance. Led by the Bolsheviks, they began to arm themselves. A squad of armed workers was formed by the district Party Committee.

Kalinin immersed himself completely in these turbulent events. An experienced and staunch Bolshevik and Leninist, he was elected a member of the district Party Committee. He and a number of other activists took the initiative of setting up a legal workers' club in the Narva District. Kalinin, better known at that time by his Party pseudonym of "Nikanor", gave talks in the club and engaged the workers in discussions. It was here, in this club, that he met Lenin personally for the first time in February 1906.

Time flew. Organizational and propaganda work continued to take up all the day, leaving not a minute free. Yet it was precisely at this busy time for Kalinin that an important event took place in his personal life. He fell in love.

He was thirty years old then. Energetic and purposeful, always alert and disciplined, he did not mind a joke and a bit of fun between serious business. Women found him attractive. But he was still heart-free himself.

One day he met some Revel friends who had arrived in Petersburg. With them there were a few people he had never seen before—among them Katya Lorberg, a slender, graceful and pretty girl. She worked as a weaver in Revel, and, it turned out, had attended the May Day celebrations where Kalinin spoke. They discovered that they had common friends, and, more important still, that they liked each other.

Several months later Katya became Kalinin's wife and she remained his true companion and friend to the end of his long life.

At the Fourth Party Congress

Revolutionary tension in the country was growing. On December 7, 1905 the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies declared a general political strike. On December 10, the strike developed into an armed uprising. Barricades appeared on the streets of Moscow. Street fighting began.

The proletariat of Petersburg were prepared to start an uprising too in support of their Moscow brothers. All they were waiting for was word from the Petersburg Soviet. But the Mensheviks at the head of that Soviet were bent on checking the development of the revolutionary initiative of the workers.

The appropriate moment slipped by. On December 13, the soldiers swooped down the Putilov Plant. Arrests and dismissals followed. Kalinin only escaped arrest by leaving for Verkhnyaya Troitsa.

The Moscow uprising was crushed. Although in December 1905 and January 1906 there were uprisings in other cities, the revolution gradually died down.

A month later Kalinin returned to

Petersburg and began to work at a pipe factory. There could be no question of his being taken on again at the Putilov Plant.

No matter what lengths the police went to, they could not arrest all those who had participated in the revolution. In spite of their repressions, people joined the Party in great numbers. Mostly they were workers. It was becoming a mass Party. Hence the decision to convene the next, Fourth Congress of the Party. As it could not be held in Russia, it met in April 1906 in Stockholm, and came to be known as the Unity Congress, for it set itself the task of uniting all the Social-Democratic organizations existing in Russia.

The Bolsheviks of the Pipe Factory elected Kalinin their delegate to the Congress. Participation in the work of the Congress at Lenin's side was a wonderful political school for him. He was deeply impressed with the conviction and firmness with which Lenin defended the principles of a working-class Marxist party.

On his return from Stockholm, the Petersburg Party Committee assigned him to the task of organizing a trade union of the metal workers of Vasilevsky Ostrov, a district of Petersburg. Considering that there were always spies on his trail, that was anything but easy. Three times the police dispersed the meetings of the sponsoring group set up by Kalinin. In the end, of course, the Vasilevsky Ostrov metal workers had their trade union, and Mikhail Kalinin was elected its secretary. At a city-wide meeting of metal workers which he attended as a delegate, he was also elected a member of the Board of the Petersburg Union of Metal Workers. The union grew rapidly. Starting out in June 1906 with only 885 members, it increased its membership within one month to more than nine and a half thousand.

The Repressions Got Stiffer

The arrests of revolutionaries had not stopped. Kalinin had long been under secret police surveillance, and he was arrested once again. But he had become an experienced revolutionary by this time, and the police could not put their hands on sufficiently compromising material to justify his detention. They had to let him out.

Soon, however, he was fired from the pipe factory for coming to the defence of a worker who had been unjustly dismissed. He took a job in an optical factory, but did not keep it very long.

He could not be jobless for long now, because he had a family to support; his wife had just born him a son. Sad news had come from Verkhnyaya Troitsa. His father had died, and his mother needed his help. Kalinin and his family moved to the village of his birth, where he plowed and sowed and did a farmer's work while trying to earn something extra on the side.

Not until 1908 did Kalinin leave the village and take up residence in Moscow, where he found employment as an electrician in a power station and resumed his revolutionary activities. Again and again he was arrested, fired from work, sent back to the village; again and again he returned illegally now to Moscow, now to Petersburg. The following years were years of repeated arrests and exile

At the Sixth All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP which met in Prague in 1912, Kalinin was elected by proxy to candidate membership in the Central Committee of the Party and to the Russian Bureau for the direction of revolutionary work in Russia.

On August 1, 1914 the world war broke out. Engendered by the acute contradictions of imperialism, it was a war for a redivision of the world among the

big powers, for the augmentation of the capitalists' profits. It was sparked off by the contradictions between British and German imperialism. Afraid that Germany would gain world supremacy, Great Britain concluded an agreement with France to fight jointly against Germany. Their alliance came to be known as the Entente.

The Russian capitalists also had their quarrel with Germany, whose products were competing with theirs on the Russian market. Russia joined the Entente.

Russian tsarism had still another reason for entering the war. With its help it thought it could stifle the great revolutionary movement that had been steadily growing over the past decade. The tsarist government hoped to divert the people's attention from their own needs and make them believe that the war was being waged to save the nation.

In all countries, including Russia, the bourgeios political parties exhorted the people to support the war. The Russian Mensheviks also endorsed the bourgeois slogan of "defense of the fatherland".

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party came out resolutely against the war, and urged the working people not to fight for the interests of the capitalists.

In reply, the tsarist government intensified its repressions against the Bolsheviks, arresting the leaders of the Party and wrecking its premises. But no terror or provocations or repressions, however cruel, could break the Bolshevik Party or make it discontinue its work.

The war brought the working people hunger, cold, and suffering and reduced all spheres of the economy to ruin. The hardest hit was agriculture. Large numbers of farms were rendered destitute: the men went off to the army, and the women and old people left on the land could not keep food production at its previous level. The railways were not transporting food products promptly. The needs of the people were not satisfied. There was not enough bread, the prices of commodities soared while wages remained at the previous level or rose but slightly. The bourgeoisie reaped fabulous profits while the masses bore all the hardships of the war.

All during the war Mikhail Kalinin did propaganda work. He explained to the workers the real causes and aims of the carnage instigated by the capitalists. He exposed those who stood for the "defense of the fatherland". He addressed the men going into the army, urging them to turn their guns against the autocracy and bourgeoisie.

In 1914 and 1915 Kalinin had a Party assignment to strengthen the illegal Bolshevik organizations of Petrograd (the name Petersburg was changed to Petrograd in 1914). As of old, the police kept a close watch on him. Here is an excerpt from another police report on him:

"Kalinin, Mikhail Ivanov. According to the reports of our agents, he is a Social-Democrat (Bolshevik) and a follower of Lenin. And a prominent and active Party worker. Some years ago he was a member of the Petrograd Committee, attended the congresses of the Social-Democrats. Has had considerable experience in organizational work, has broad contacts with the intelligentsia, enjoys great popularity among the workers. Often speaks at meetings, calling on the workers to strike. Is a good speaker and propagandist. In 1915 his Party pseudonym was 'Nikanor Petrov'..."

His Last Arrest

On January 8, 1916, Kalinin was arrested again, for the fourteenth time.

For a whole year he had to put up

with endless interrogation. The police could not get any useful information from him.

While in custody, Kalinin continued his self-education, reading everything he could put his hands on.

Finally, when they saw they could not wheedle any incriminating information out of him, the authorities decided to send him away to Eastern Siberia. He was given permission to travel to his place of exile at his own expense instead of over the convict trail. He escaped, and on orders of the Petrograd Party Committee continued to live in the city illegally under the name of Lorberg, taking work in a small instrumental shop in the city and resuming his revolutionary activities.

At the end of February 1917, the tsarist regime toppled in Russia under the blows of the revolutionary masses. The bourgeoisie seized power with the help of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who betrayed the interests of the workers and peasants. A bourgeois Provisional Government was established.

In Petrograd, the revolutionary masses set up their own Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on February 28. The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, taking advantage of the fact that the Bolsheviks, as the leaders of the masses, were right in the thick of the fight against tsarism, managed to take over the leadership in the Soviet. Most of the deputies to the Soviet did not understand the political situation too well. When, on March 2, 1917, the question of who should be in power came up at a plenary meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, the deputies, confused and disoriented by the hypocritical statements of those conciliators about using the Provisional Government in the interests of the revolution, approved the suggestion of the Menshevik–S. R. Executive of the Soviet that power should be vested in the Provisional-Government.

That did not mean, however, that the revolutionary masses recognized the Provisional Government. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was still in existence, was exercising real power and had the support of the people.

A dual government existed in the country.

Having carried through the February revolution and overthrown the tsar, the working people hoped that that would put an end to the war and that their vital needs would be satisfied. The peasants wanted land, and the workers–the right to free labor which provided normal living conditions.

But the Provisional Government had no intention of ending the war. Neither did it want to solve the agrarian problem and give land to the peasants. Nothing was done to improve the conditions of the workers.

That being the case, the working people and their vanguard, the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin, saw that they had to bring about the transfer of all power to the Soviets.

The revolution of February 1917 found Kalinin in the thick of things. He led the strike movement, addressed workers' meetings, formed a Bolshevik nucleus in the working class district of Vyborg, and sent agitators to the factories and mills, the barracks of the soldiers and sailors. The newspapers *Pravda* and *Soldatskaya Pravda* began to carry his articles on current topics signed "M. Kalinin, worker": on the land, the war, the Soviets, the 8-hour working day. His presentation was simple and clear even to the semi-literate worker or soldier (yesterday's peasant in soldier's uniform). And the message was plain: until the workers and peasants took power into their own hands, the people would get neither peace nor bread nor land.

How It Began

Kalinin pushed the heavy carved door open, and entered the restaurant. Its small hall was crowded and noisy. Around the tables, heaped with bottles and plates of cold fish and meat, sat the modest customers of the "Palmira". A red-haired young waiter who was weaving his way skilfully between the close-standing tables said politely to Kalinin:

"You'll find a free table by the window."

Kalinin nodded and proceeded to the table, spread with a spotted gray cloth, sat down, and took out a newspaper to read. The red-haired waiter came around shortly, asking:

"What will you have?"

"Oh, I guess the same beer and cheese—and some crayfish if there's any... that would be nice..."

The waiter went off to fill the order and Kalinin looked around. There were lots of people in the place. They seemed to be having quite a party at the table next to his, petty clerks by the looks of them.

The place rang with the clinking of knives and forks and sound of bottles being opened and glasses filled. There was the usual hum of disorderly conversation typical of cheap restaurants. Kalinin smiled to himself. "If only Katya could see where I spend my evenings nowadays! She's never known me to take a drink at home. Now I've become a regular pub hound."

He swallowed some of the fragrant, bitterish beer. This was probably as good a place for secret meetings as any. Would it enter anyone's head that the revolutionaries of Petrograd were meeting every evening in a cheap little restaurant? The purpose of these meetings was to pass on instructions and keep the Petrograd Committee of the Bolshevik Party posted on the situation in the factories. This evening, for instance, Kalinin was supposed to meet several agitators from the Aivaz and Nobel plants here.

Kalinin had been out of jail a month. For lack of evidence they were letting him alone for a while, but the authorities would have preferred to have him farther from the capital. The Party Committee decided that he should go underground. These were crucial and dangerous times and every experienced revolutionary was needed by the Party.

Lost in thought, Kalinin did not notice the two men who had just come in. One was a very tall elderly looking worker, the other a young fellow with red cheeks and heavy well-shaped eyebrows which met over his nose. They glanced around and began to move deliberately in the direction of Kalinin's table. The elder of the two shouted for all the world to hear:

"Kolya, looks like there's room for us by the window..."

On reaching the table, the elderly man asked:

"Mind if we sit here, buddy?"

"Help yourselves. There's room for us all."

The newcomers proved quite talkative.

"And then Kolya? What happened then? Out with it."

"Nothing happened." The young man smiled. "We ran away, and that was all."

"Good for you! That was smart!" shouted his companion and then, turning around to the bar, he let out such a roar that one of the clerks drinking at the next table almost choked.

"Hey, how about a couple of beers and some crayfish!"

Then, in the most unexpected whisper for one who could make so much noise, he said:

"Everything is ready at Aivaz. We're

just waiting for the signal. The spirit's fine."

Kalinin took a drink from his mug and looked questioningly at the young man.

"Things are O. K. at Nobel. Sedoi asked me to tell you that there were spies milling around the entrance, looking for somebody. He said not to show up there for a while."

Kalinin did not take his eyes from his beer or change his posture. In an even voice, he said:

"Copies of the appeal of the Petrograd Committee are inside this newspaper. Take them with you when you go out and divide them equally between you. Tell the comrades to be ready to capture the Arsenal. We've got to have weapons."

"We're ready this minute. That sounds more like it, eh?" The elderly man scratched his ear. "We've been making do with cobblestones too long."

The waiter arrived with a plate piled high with crayfish and two mugs of beer, put them on the table in front of the elderly man, and gave him a queer look.

Nothing more was said for a while. Then, returning to a whisper, the elderly man asked:

"Remember Auntie Evdokia, Mikhail? The woman you once stood up for when they tried to fire her?"

"Oh, yes. Sure, I remember her."

"Her husband was killed at the front. Left with four children on her hands, she is, and tiny tots all of them."

Kalinin frowned.

"Damn the war! How all those drivelling patriots mocked us when we Bolsheviks came out against this senseless and cruel war!"

He recalled that after that time, when he had warned the shop managers that if they dared to fire Evdokia the workers would stop their machines, she had come up to him and said:

"Be careful with that Bondarchuk, Mikhail. His brother's a gendarme". And had hurried away with her quick, small steps.

"We've got to help her."

"We have already. The fellows have collected a little sum. But how long can it last?"

"All right, we'll think of something," said Kalinin and returned to the main subject: "The strike has been set for February 23. That's settled, Stepan, and now wait for our messenger. No surprises. Everything on orders, and only on orders."

The elderly worker drained his mug, wiped his lips and got up. The second worker followed suit, picking up the newspaper nonchalantly and putting it under his shirt.

Again the air was rent by a resonant bass:

"Thanks for the company, buddy! Hey there, get your money!

And they were gone.

Before long three other workers sat down at Kalinin's table. They came from the Piterskaya Storona District. Again reports, news, instructions.

But once there was an unpleasant incident. A man came in and looked searchingly around the room; his peculiar behavior made Kalinin suspect that he was a spy. He buried himself deeper in his newspaper and tried to remember where he had seen that mean freckled face before. Suddenly it came to him. Of course the man was a spy! The very same one Kalinin had had to give the slip to on his way home from the "Pravda" office.

Just then two comrades entered. Kalinin gave them the danger sign and turned his eyes in the direction of Freckle-Face.

The latter was standing at the bar talking to the owner of the pub, who then went out through the back door. The two newcomers also made for the bar.

One of them was apparently in his cups and feeling very gay and communicative. The spy didn't like that bit of distraction and tried to shut him up. The owner returned and whispered something to Freckle-Face, who turned around abruptly at his words and looked towards the other door.

His eyes fell on Kalinin and lit up with surprise and then gloating; he had obviously recognized Kalinin. He began to move slowly but resolutely towards that table.

"Mind if I sit here?"

"Sorry, that's our table," came a sharp rejoinder from behind his back.

The voice was that of the tipsy newcomer, who stood there with his companion, eyeing Freckle-Face hostilely and belligerently.

"It's our table, and nobody invited you to join us! Sit down, Petro." The "drunk" pushed his friend into a chair.

Freckle-Face turned away and went out.

"We must leave this place immediately," Kalinin said. "He's gone out to fetch the police."

After that Kalinin did not use that meeting place any more. It was too dangerous.

Two weeks went by. On the morning of the general strike he went to his shop a little earlier than usual. Suddenly a young fellow ran in from the street shouting:

"Put down your tools! Everybody has come out on the streets. You should see what's happening!"

"It has started!" Kalinin told himself with satisfaction. He looked at his watch. Yes, this was it! The excitement outside was spreading to the shop. Kalinin stopped his lathe and motioned to his neighbors to quit work too. Within a minute, an uncustomary silence had settled on the shop.

Columns of workers with Kalinin at their head began to move toward the Finland Railway Station. The columns grew in size on the way. They found a large crowd already gathered at the station. It seethed with excitement, breaking into angry cries: "We've had enough!" "Down with the tsar!"

Suddenly swarms of soldiers poured out of one of the side streets. It was the Preobrazhensky Regiment, a regiment in which, as Kalinin knew, most of the soldiers were on the side of the revolution and had responded with sympathy to the speeches of agitators.

The workers and soldiers intermingled and began to fraternize. That raised the fighting spirit of the crowd still more. Kalinin jumped up on a stool and shouted:

"Let us free the comrades who are in prison!"

"Let the comrades out!" rang the cry over the square.

The crowd grew restless. Somebody shouted:

"There are two prisons nearby—the Kresty and the military jail."

"Follow me who will to Kresty," commanded Kalinin. "The rest can go to the military jail."

Kalinin marched, or rather ran in front of the rows of workers and soldiers moving toward the prison, and his heart sang with joy. At last! This was it, the Russian revolution! For a second it seemed to him that he had been through it all before. He had thought so much and so long about this day, and dreamed of it beginning, the revolution, that now his dreams and the reality seemed to have grown together in his mind.

Suddenly, as if the advancing rows had struck a wall, they shuddered and slowed down. Mounted gendarmes were heading towards them from the opposite direction. Now they were riding into the crowd, brandishing their guns. Random shots were fired. Somebody cried out in pain. But quickly the crowd was gather-

ing itself up again. It turned against the gendarmes, pulling them off their horses, throwing them to the ground. Revolvers flashed in the workers' hands.

"The guns from the Arsenal. Just what we need," said Kalinin to himself. He felt a pain in his cheek and wiped away the blood. So that tall moustached gendarme, the one who was trying to break out of the workers' hold, had nipped him in the cheek after all.

"Wounded, Mikhail?"

It was his old friend, Nikifor Sidorov, at his side.

"It's nothing, just a scratch."

And there he was again running ahead of the standard-bearer and shouting in a youthful, happy voice:

"Long live the revolution!"

The workers broke into both prisons, overcoming the guards. When two of them tried to open fire, a dozen arms restrained them.

The prison doors clanged and squeaked rustily. The prisoners fell into the waiting embraces of their liberators.

Kalinin smiled and clasped the hands of each of the comrades as they left their cells. One of them stared hard at him.

"Don't you know me, Misha?"

A pair of black eyes, sunk-deep into their sockets, looked out at him. They were the eyes of a very sick man. He was extremely thin, and the streaks of gray in his hair accentuated the impression of great suffering.

"Grisha!"

They embraced.

Kalinin held Grigori Monakhov, pal of his Kresty days, in his arms, and said sadly to himself: "What have they done to you, my friend!" But to his old friend he turned a smiling face.

"Well, Grisha, now everything will be fine! You're free, and everything will be fine!"

Before Grigori could answer, a fit of coughing seized him, and his body shook with a rasping spasm that seemed as though it would never end. Tears were streaming down his cheeks by the time it stopped and he had caught his breath.

Kalinin put his arms around Grigori's shoulder and led him out into the fresh air.

In the evening he learnt at the Petrograd Party Committee that all of Petrograd was in rebellion.

That was the beginning. The great, the main victory was yet to come.

IV. The October Victory

A small two-storey house built of logs may be seen in a quiet, picturesque outskirt of Leningrad. With its little spires and towers it looks like a fairy house which in some mysterious way was plunked down in this modern city of millions.

Big apartment houses stand at a respectful distance from the little green oasis. Anyone can tell you how to reach it before you are within blocks of the place.

Leningrad can boast of many beautiful buildings designed by famous architects, but it is not for its architecture that our fairy house is famed. A memorial slab beside the entrance explains its importance. It was here that the *uprava* (the executive) of the Lesnovsky-Udelninsky District Duma was housed in the autumn of 1917, and Mikhail Kalinin was its head. Here, too, on October 16, 1917, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party held a plenary meeting which adopted Lenin's resolution on the armed uprising and elected a Revolutionary Military Center under the Central Committee to direct the uprising.

But more about that later. Let us return now to the life and activities of Mikhail Kalinin on the eve of the victorious revolution of October 1917.

Circumstances had placed Kalinin in the very center of the revolutionary movement of the Petrograd proletariat. A recognized leader of the proletariat, experienced underground worker, skilled agitator, convinced Leninist, he saw the importance of the historical moment and the necessity for decisive action at this time when a bourgeois-democratic revolution had been successfully carried out and the transition to the proletarian revolution was under way.

The tsarist system had collapsed. Victory was near but still had to be won, for the landlords and the capitalists had remained in power and the Provisional Government was zealously guarding their interests.

Kalinin was busily engaged in propaganda and organizational work the primary aim of which was to restore the city Party Committee. The conditions of the struggle demanded precise coordination of the actions of the proletariat and daily guidance of the revolutionary movement. That is why on March 2, 1917, the day when the composition of the Provisional Government was announced, members of the RSDLP(B) met in the building that housed the Petrograd Labour Exchange to discuss the restoration of the city Party Committee. Kalinin was elected a member of the Committee. Several hours later the Committee held a meeting in the Tauride Palace–its first legal meeting.

At that meeting, Kalinin was chosen to represent the Petrograd Committee with a decisive vote in the Bureau of the Central Committee of the RSDLP(B), and shortly afterwards, on the recommendation of the Central Committee, he was made a member of the editorial board of *Pravda*.

The revolutionary developments had electrified the working people of Petro-

grad. A wave of strikes swept the city. Many enterprises were at a standstill. The streets seethed with meetings and demonstrations.

All that overflowing anger and joy, despair and hope had to be channeled in the direction of organized revolutionary struggle.

That is why the question of how to use the present moment, whether the workers should continue to strike or resume work, was heatedly discussed by the Petrograd Committee of the Party at its very first meeting.

The question was one of crucial importance for the fate of the revolution. In the course of the debate some of the speakers, hiding behind left phrases, argued that the termination of the strikes would be a blow to the revolution. Kalinin and the majority of Committee members, on the other hand, felt that the proletariat's forceful protest by stopping work had already played its role and that continuation of the strikes would only worsen the conditions of the workers, which were already bad beyond endurance. Kalinin took the floor. His listeners waited to hear what the man who had stood at the lathe himself for many years had to say.

"Comrades!" he began. "The workers of Petrograd have proved their mettle in revolutionary struggle and the overthrow of the monarchy. Now it's time for them to go back to work, and without further delay."

There was a rumble of voices.

"Yes, without further delay," continued Kalinin firmly. "Every day of the strike robs the working man of his pay and takes the bread out of the mouths of his children. He has to work. But he should work eight hours a day, and not a second more!"

He went on: "There's no reason to fear that the workers' strength and determination will fade away in the factories. That's not true. As you must know, the most successful strikes were those that began right in the factories."

The meeting decided to end the strikes and instruct the workers to enforce the 8-hour day themselves, without waiting for permission to be granted by the bosses.

A Word to the Peasants

The period from February to October 1917 was one of the busiest of Kalinin's life. The Party had assigned to him extremely responsible tasks. He was a member of the Petrograd Committee and its representative in the Central Committee, he made innumerable speeches, and he wrote for *Pravda.* His articles of that period were devoted to a subject of primary importance to the Bolsheviks—the peasantry. The fate of the revolution depended on which way the millions upon millions of Russian peasants went. It was therefore all the more necessary for them to understand the aims and tasks of the proletarian revolution and see through the half-hearted bourgeois-democratic revolution which had not given them land or emancipated them from their slavery and poverty, ignorance and oppression.

Having himself grown up in a typical Russian village, Kalinin was familiar with and alerted to the needs and problems of the peasants and spoke to the latter in words that went to their hearts. His articles, *On the Land* and *The Revolution and the Village,* both published in *Pravda,* exerted a great influence on the peasants, explaining to them the precise aims of the struggle: to take the land from the landowners and create popular governing bodies in each locality.

There are many evidences that those to whom Kalinin addressed his articles understood them and trusted the author. Here is a telegram, for instance, that

Pravda received in response to the articles:

"Your countrymen from the villages of Nikulkino, Shevrigin and others send you their May Day greetings, dear comrade, and hail you as a fighter for the freedom of the people. We express our solidarity with the demands of the working class for their social rights. Greetings to the whole staff of *Pravda*. Long live Social-Democracy!"

Publicistic and journalistic writing occupied a considerable place in Kalinin's activities at this time. The Bolshevik Party was rallying the masses of people for the decisive assault on capitalism. Kalinin's articles explained the Party's line concretely and convincingly, illustrating it with vivid examples. They were addressed to all sections of the working people—the workers, the soldiers, the peasants. And they always evoked a response. For Kalinin had the gift of explaining the most important subjects clearly and in words that were understandable to his audience without over-simplifying basic theoretical premises. He did not preach or exhort but rather seemed to be holding conversations with his readers, during which he touched on subjects close to their hearts.

In this period he wrote, in addition to the articles mentioned earlier, many others: *On the Bolsheviks, On the War, The Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies* and *Two Roads*. His work for *Pravda* was his school of Party publicist activity, and it stood him in good stead to the end of his life.

Lenin Arrived

Kalinin's prestige in the Party continued to grow. On March 7, 1917 he was elected to the Bureau of the Central Committee and the Executive Commission of the Petrograd Committee. That meant even more work, but Kalinin understood its importance and gave himself unstintingly to the cause of the proletariat.

At the Kschessinska Mansion, where the Central and Petrograd committees of the Party then had their offices, Mikhail Kalinin was to be seen only very early in the morning, when its luxurious halls, until recently the apartments of the favorite of the last Russian tsar Nicholas II, were thronged with people dressed in ordinary street clothes, in workers' overalls, in soldiers' uniforms.

After looking through the papers and the mail on his desk and taking care of urgent business, Kalinin left for the factories or Party units. But on April 3 (16), he lingered at the headquarters longer than usual, for the happy news they had been waiting for so long had come at last. Lenin was returning to Russia from emigration!

The news had been brought in by Lenin's sister, who had received a telegram from him from Finland.

The Committee members met to devise some way of relaying the news of Lenin's arrival to the workers of Petrograd that same evening. They hit upon a clever and simple scheme: they wrote "Lenin Is Coming Today" on streamers and dozens of people went out into the streets of the capital carrying these unusual "telegrams".

That evening thousands of excited and elated people flocked to the Finland Railway Station. There was an orchestra, and red flags waved, and revolutionary slogans were shouted.

It was here, at this station, from the platform of an armoured car, that Lenin made his rousing speech ending with the call: "Long live the socialist revolution!"

On April 4, Kalinin and other comrades heard Lenin present his famous *April Theses* in which he clearly charted the line for the development of the bour-

geois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. The Party was given inspired slogans of struggle, slogans that answered the need of the hour: "No support for the Provisional Government! All power to the Soviets!"

The fight for the realization of those slogans was beset with great difficulties. Not only the overt reactionaries and monarchists, but their *de facto* abettors, the conciliators, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, were up in arms against the Party's line of preparing for a socialist revolution, and began to malign Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

By their demagogy and slander they hoped to disorient the working class and the peasantry and alienate them from the Bolsheviks.

Skilfully and persistently, Mikhail Kalinin expounded Lenin's ideas on the socialist revolution. His timely and trenchant articles explaining the Party's line and denouncing its enemies appeared regularly in the Bolshevik press.

In the Vyborg District

At this decisive period of the struggle for the support of the masses, Kalinin carried on very extensive Party work in the working class Vyborg District of Petrograd. There he was a familiar figure to practically every worker.

Thanks to the efforts of the Party committees, the workers and soldiers of Petrograd came out on May Day with the Bolshevik slogans: "Down with the war!" and "All power to the Soviets!"

That did not mean that the Mensheviks had given up the fight. Making the most of their influence in certain district Soviets, they engaged in insidious subversion against the Bolsheviks. Soon the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries were included in the composition of the Provisional Government when it saw how catastrophically fast it was losing the support of the people.

There followed a period of new clashes with the bourgeoisie, whose side the enemies of the Party of Lenin openly joined. The Central Committee felt that under the circumstances it was necessary for the workers to hold a demonstration under the slogans: "All power to the Soviets!" and "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!" The demonstration was set for June 10.

But at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets on June 9 the Mensheviks managed to push through a resolution forbidding the demonstration.

Always disciplined and self-controlled, the Bolsheviks complied with the decision of the Congress and called off the demonstration. Members of the Central Committee were sent to the factories to explain to the workers why the demonstration would not be held. Kalinin went to the Aivaz Plant which he knew well and where he was well known, but even so he found it hard to convince the workers not to go out into the streets. That is how enraged they were by the policies of the Provisional Government.

Kalinin spoke for several hours before he was able to persuade the Aivaz workers to abide by the decision of the Committee. The result at other plants was the same.

The cancellation of the demonstration laid the Petrograd Committee open to severe criticism from some of its members. Lenin patiently explained to them what prompted the Bolsheviks' decision, and Kalinin supported him. Addressing himself to the grumblers, Kalinin said:

"Try to imagine the outcome if we had not complied with the decision of the Congress of Soviets. Sure, Petrograd would have supported us, that's clear. But what about the provinces? And what do you suppose the Provisional Government would have done? It's likely that

it might have instigated a bloody provocation against us."

Shortly after that in an article for *Soldatskaya Pravda* entitled *The Crisis of Power* he appraised the obtaining situation as follows:

"The political crisis in Petrograd is coming to a head: the masses are beginning to understand the real nature of the conciliatory parties better every day... The near future will show what kind of leaders the socialist ministers will be, leaders of the revolution or leaders of the counter-revolution."

But the demonstration was held after all, on June 18. The decision to hold it was passed by the Presidium of the First Congress of Soviets which did not want to completely forfeit the trust of the masses. About 500,000 people poured out into the streets, making clear the mood of the masses. Most of the demonstrators bore on high the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" A mere handful carried slogans expressing confidence in the Provisional Government.

The July Demonstration

On July 3 preparations started spontaneously in Petrograd for a demonstration against the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks felt that conditions were not yet ripe for the armed uprising and seizure of power, but it was no longer possible to hold back the masses. The scale and trend of their manifestations and the demands of the workers prompted the Central Committee to take part in the demonstration and at the same time do everything possible to keep it peaceful and prevent useless bloodshed.

In a speech before the demonstrators Kalinin cautioned:

"The utmost discipline and organization are what we need above all! See that you don't fall for provocations; that's exactly what the Provisional Government is waiting for in order to drown the peaceful movement of the people of Petrograd in blood."

That was indeed what the Provisional Government was looking for—a pretext to start repressions. On July 4, 1917, the Junkers and Cossacks opened fire on the demonstration of workers and soldiers. About 400 people were killed or wounded. Then came the hounding of the Bolsheviks, the arrests and searches. The editorial office and printshop of the newspaper *Pravda* were wrecked.

Nevertheless, the Party led by Lenin continued the struggle and went on working among the masses. Its most stalwart fighters were sent to the factories and mills of the capital. Kalinin went back to his job in the Pipe Factory as a turner.

In addition to hard work at the lathe, Kalinin held talks with the workers and arranged discussions and meetings. The workers were drawn to him; they trusted him because they knew him as one of themselves. It was only natural that they nominated him their candidate to the city Duma and the Duma of the Lesnovsky District. His backers had every reason to be confident that he would honestly defend the interests of the working man to the last.

The days were too short: besides a full-time job at the factory he did work at the Committee and at the district Executive. There were meetings and endless business of all kinds. And he had a family, after all.

His wife understood that the cause her husband was working for was foremost in his life and never reproached him. In his rare moments of leisure, he told her what was going on in the factory and the city.

"Katya, do you know what's happening at the Pipe Factory? The Mensheviks are stirring up trouble. They've

been lying to the men. But nobody believes them any more."

Then he would gulp down his glass of cold tea and disappear again for several days.

On to the Armed Uprising

The Party was preparing for its next, Sixth Congress, which was to decide crucial problems. Police surveillance and persecution impeded the preparations and the convocation of the Congress. It finally met in Petrograd between July 26 and August 3, 1917, under semi-legal conditions and without Lenin. By decision of the Party, his whereabouts were concealed to evade the spies of the Provisional Government. The Congress adopted a decision to prepare the proletariat and the poorest peasantry for the armed uprising.

The struggle began for a majority in the Soviets, and, through them, for influence over the masses. At a meeting at the Pipe Factory where Kalinin worked, he had to parry repeated attacks from the spokesmen for the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. He demolished their arguments in support of the Provisional Government's policy and exposed its false, undemocratic essence. On behalf of the Bolsheviks he submitted a motion containing these demands: that all the landed estates be handed over immediately and without compensation to the peasant committees; that the key industries be nationalized; that the Provisional Committee of the State Duma, which had become a seat of counter-revolutionary conspiracies, be arrested. His proposal was accepted, with only one voice abstaining and one against. Similar meetings took place at other factories in Petrograd. By September the Bolsheviks had a majority vote in the Soviets.

Equally successful for the Bolsheviks were the elections to the Lesnovsky District Duma, of which Kalinin was a member. Not long afterwards he was elected the head of the local Duma Executive.

So began a new phase in the history of the picturesque little house on the outskirts of Petrograd. Formerly the suburban villa of the manager of a number of foreign concerns, it became the headquarters of the revolutionary proletariat of the Lesnovsky-Udelninsky District.

Mikhail Kalinin had little administrative or managerial experience. But what he had were years of experience as a professional revolutionary, and the stamina of a factory worker, the resourcefulness of a peasant, and a vast store of knowledge on a variety of subjects.

On assuming his post as head of the district Executive, he chose a reliable and intelligent staff of helpers and demanded unfailing fulfilment of duties and strict discipline from each. At the same time he led the struggle against the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and Cadets in the Duma, who were turning that body into a seat of bourgeois counter-revolution. Kalinin and his Party comrades directed their efforts towards speeding the preparations for the armed uprising.

For the days of the decisive battle with the bourgeoisie were drawing near.

On October 5, the Petrograd Committee of the Party met under Kalinin's chairmanship to discuss Lenin's letters to the Central, Moscow and Petrograd committees urging that the preparations for the uprising be hastened.

On October 7, Lenin returned to Petrograd. The next day he asked the Central Committee to meet and there it was decided to begin the uprising in the coming days.

In that period in October, Lenin and Kalinin saw a great deal of each other.

During one of their many talks, Lenin asked Kalinin whether he considered the moment ripe for decisive action.

In reply the leader of the revolution heard Kalinin's firm: "Certainly!"

The question of the armed uprising of the proletariat was again discussed by Lenin and members of the Central Committee during a meeting in Kalinin's apartment.

On October 15, the Central Committee's resolution was considered by the Petrograd Committee of the Party which reached the following conclusion, as stated by Kalinin:

"The Central Committee's resolution is one of the best resolutions it has ever adopted. The resolution is a call to our organization to take political action. We have in fact come face to face with the armed uprising; the hour has struck."

Lenin felt that before a final decision could be taken on that crucial question it was first necessary to hold a plenary meeting, in the nearest future, of the Central Committee and representatives of the Petrograd Committee, the military organization, the Petrograd Soviet, the Petrograd Regional Committee, the factory committees and the trade unions. A safe and convenient place for the meeting had to be found. Kalinin suggested the premises of the Lesnovsky Duma. His offer was accepted.

And so on October 16, 1917, a historic meeting was held in the office of M. I. Kalinin, head of the Lesnovsky District Executive. The purpose of the meeting was to endorse the Party's decision on the uprising and to elect a Revolutionary-Military Center to direct it.

The debate dragged out, and before they knew it the night had passed. Lenin put his resolution before them:

"The meeting fully welcomes and fully supports the resolution of the Central Committee and calls upon all organizations and on workers and soldiers to make all-round, energetic preparations for an armed uprising and to support the center set up for that purpose by the Central Committee; the meeting expresses its complete confidence that the Central Committee and the Soviet will indicate in good time the favorable moment and the most appropriate methods of attack."

The resolution was adopted by a majority vote.

It was dawn when the meeting broke up. Kalinin was the last to leave the building. Here is how he recalled that event in later years:

"Seven or eight days before October 25, I was told to prepare the premises for a big Party meeting. It was being called to set a final date for the uprising. Thirty to thirty-five people attended it. For the first time all the different opinions on the uprising were heard out here. By a huge majority, with only seven or perhaps nine opposed, it was decided to begin the uprising."

Yekaterina Alexeyeva, a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1909, described the same event as follows:

"I still remember the events of those days clearly. I was working at the time at the Aivaz Plant. The Bolsheviks had scored a victory in the elections to the Petrograd district Dumas. There were mostly Bolsheviks in our Lesnovsky Duma as well. M. I. Kalinin was elected the head of the district Executive. It was he who came up with the idea that I go to work in the Duma. On the afternoon of October 16 he called me in and told me that an important meeting was to take place that day and that we had to be on our toes. All kinds of precautions were taken. The kitchen window on the first floor was opened so that if neces-

sary people could climb out to the yard and disappear. During my break I went into the room where they were meeting just as somebody was saying:

" 'Vladimir Ilyich, you have no idea how hard it is now to work in the localities!'

"And then I saw Lenin. He was seated at a small table in a far corner of the room. He had on a dark suit, white collar, necktie.

"Although we were situated in a far-off spot where few people passed, it worried me that the participants in the meeting were talking so loud. I took a walk along Bolotnaya Street and went back to the house and the room where they were meeting, and told the comrade standing at the door that snatches of their talk could be heard outside. There was a muffled whisper: 'Quieter, comrades, quieter', and they began to talk in hushed tones."

* * *

The armed uprising was now the most important question on the agenda. But of course its successful realization called for titanic work which had to be done literally within a few days.

The Party's best propagandists–Yakov Sverdlov, Anatoli Lunacharsky, Nikolai Krylenko, Vladimir Nevsky, Mikhail Kalinin–were sent out to conduct explanatory work among the masses. Kalinin did not give up his work in the Duma or the Petrograd Committee, but still found time to speak at all kinds of meetings, often several a day. He took an active part in the preparations for the uprising, which culminated in the victory of the revolutionary people on October 25, 1917.

V. At the Head of the Petrograd Duma

In Leningrad there are monuments to the revolution almost at every step. That is hardly surprising, for that city on the Neva is the cradle of the October revolution. Its streets and squares still remember the proletarian columns which marched to the storm of the Winter Palace. The legendary cruiser *Aurora,* the roar of whose guns heralded the beginning of the era of the socialist revolution, is moored there for the rest of time.

In the tall building, visible from afar, which rises like a fire-tower over the Nevsky Prospekt, the former Petrograd Duma (the executive body of the city government) was once housed. In November 1917 it opened its doors to a new mayor (Chairman of the Petrograd Duma and its Executive), Mikhail Kalinin. For the first time in history, a worker was chosen to be the mayor of the capital of one of the biggest countries in the world.

The events that led up to that development were as follows. In accordance with the will of the masses, the Council of People's Commissars passed a decree disbanding the Petrograd Duma, two-thirds of whose members were Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. A new Duma was elected, in which the Bolsheviks received 188 of the 200 seats. One of those elected was Kalinin, who enjoyed great popularity in the Lesnovsky District.

During the elections to the municipal Executive the Petrograd Party organization put forward Mikhail Kalinin's candidacy for the post of chairman. He was elected almost unanimously and became the mayor of Petrograd.

It is not hard to imagine the dissatisfaction of the professional seat-warmers of the previous Duma and their supporters in the new one with the new mayor. In the chair once occupied by their henchman now sat an ordinary worker wearing knee-high boots and a *kosovorotka* * shirt who, according to them, knew nothing but his lathe and had never addressed any audiences but those composed of people like himself. What a disgrace!

Such was the reaction of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Cadets to Kalinin's election. The old municipal Executive which had been disbanded by decree continued to sit and refused to recognize the new mayor. It greeted him with angry sneers. Kalinin remembered the reaction to his election:

"They found my appearance funny. They thought it funny that the Party was doing such an obviously stupid thing as to take a man straight out of the factory and put him in a post which was the monopoly of the privileged caste."

Here is another excerpt from Kalinin's memoirs:

"On the day after I was elected ... Comrades Manuilsky and Pilyavsky and I arrived at the session of the old Socialist-Revolutionary municipal Executive where I presented myself as the newly elected city head. That announcement was received with mocking laughter in-

* A shirt with a side fastening.

sulting to the proletariat. In that laughter one could feel hatred and contempt; one could feel that the people who called themselves democrats were intrinsically unable to understand or to reconcile themselves to the fact that the working class had taken power into its own hands. They were absolutely sure that in a few days it could drop out of those hands."

The outgoing mayor Shreider, a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, gave his employees two months' advance pay, so certain was he that that would be about all the time the old masters needed to reinstate themselves in the Petrograd Duma.

The enemies of the proletariat were not only concerned about lost seats and cushy jobs, however. They knew perfectly well how important the Duma was for Petrograd, and for their counter-revolutionary plans at that time of imminent famine and ruin following the war. They had hoped to use that influential governing body as a weapon in their fight against the revolution and the Bolsheviks. When that weapon was taken out of their hands, they tried to wreck it, to make it unmanageable and useless.

The old employees of the Executive purposely misplaced, damaged and even destroyed documents; they sabotaged the orders of the new city head; they stayed away from work.

Yes, the new mayor had cause to throw up his arms in despair. But the Party had taught Kalinin to cope with difficulties. He knew that the biggest undertakings have to be started from the smallest beginnings. On his first day in office he gathered together the employees who were loyal to the new government—mostly the technical personnel, the clerks—and had a long talk with them. He spoke of the tasks of the new Duma, the responsibility that rested on each of them, and he asked them to help him to the best of their ability to restore order.

They responded to his words. They liked the outwardly stern man who was essentially warm-hearted and kind to others, who could think soberly and intelligently and offer concrete, business-like suggestions, and who was not ashamed to ask advice from his subordinates. That was most unusual! Just try and give Shreider advice—why, his employees were even afraid to go uninvited into his office.

Kalinin's measures were not limited to talks and persuasion. He was able to distinguish those who were misled or frightened from the out-and-out and evil saboteurs and enemies, and when the latter failed to turn up for work, he had them dismissed.

Step by step, that important institution began to function smoothly under Kalinin's direction and to play a responsible role in matters affecting the fate of revolutionary Petrograd, its people, its economy and its culture.

Solicitude for the Working People

Kalinin always relied on the working people in every undertaking. He was still to be seen among the workers, talking to them, making informal speeches. He gave particular attention to those manning the municipal and transportation facilities of the city and its supplies.

There were thousands of difficult problems waiting to be solved in those days and he successfully coped with them all. Gradually the various departments of the Duma were functioning efficiently, financial problems were solved, and order was established in the capital.

An effective fight was waged against disease, the most terrible being typhus. The workers' living conditions were improved. Their families were moved out of the barracks and crowded hovels into

commodious houses formerly occupied by the bourgeoisie.

The most difficult problem was that of providing the huge city with food. Famine was at the door. Thousands of people had no work and no means of livelihood.

A complex plan which to a great extent helped to solve these problems was worked out by Kalinin. Forty thousand unemployed were engaged to repair the streets, and an equal number–to repair the canalization systems; others were sent to work the peat fields, the vegetable and other farms around the city.

Thus many seemingly insoluble problems were solved thanks to Kalinin's initiative and resourcefulness. His dedicated work as head of the city government earned him the love and respect of the Petrograd proletariat. People came to him simply to talk, as to a close friend. There were always crowds of people waiting to see him in his office, and he found time to receive and help them all. These qualities he retained even when he was made the head of the workers' and peasants' state, the first such state in the world.

Lenin and the Party had the highest opinion of his organizational talent and entrusted him with responsible positions. Anatoli Lunacharsky, the first People's Commissar for Education, spoke of his calm and even disposition, and the remarkable insight that could only have come from his genuine proletarian instinct–something hardly to be replaced by theoretical development... "Although we have had more brilliant speakers," said Lunacharsky, "when Kalinin took the floor and began without the slightest oratorial trimmings to say what he as a proletarian considered particularly important, no other voice in the Duma carried as much weight."

Kalinin did much for the children: the city's finest mansions were turned into children's homes, and he saw to it that the homes received regular food supplies.

Strict measures were adopted against speculation.

Kliment Voroshilov, who was the head of the Petrograd Security Committee at the time, gave us these impressions of Kalinin's activities:

"As the mayor of Petrograd, he had to solve many political and economic problems daily. Great numbers of people from the factories and offices, the army units and the nearby villages came to him for help and advice. He quickly found common ground with each of them and did all he could to help them. He showed remarkable talent in dealing with economic problems and was very careful not to waste any money or material resources."

Administrative work did not keep Kalinin from giving a great deal of time and thought to the political education of the people and the building of the first units of the Red Army.

The saboteurs dismissed from the Executive by Kalinin predicted that it would take the "comrades in high-boots" a century to more or less normalize life in the city. That was another of their false prophecies. The will, intelligence, talent and dedication of the people with whom Kalinin formed a well-knit collective turned the Executive into an effective instrument for the consolidation of the gains of the revolution. Kalinin passed the difficult test to which he was put by the Party and the people with flying colors.

In the spring of 1918, the Duma was abolished and a Commissariat for Municipal Affairs was set up in its place. Kalinin was made the head of the Commissariat. Again the situation familiar to us from the Duma repeated itself: the old specialists looked down on the Commissar of working class origin. The atmosphere in which Mikhail Kalinin entered upon the performance of his new duties was described by one of his fellow-workers of those years as follows:

"During the first few months of Kalinin's direction of the Commissariat, many of our engineers and specialists thought they could come in to report to him without doing any homework. They looked down on him and felt that since he was an ordinary worker he did not know anything about municipal affairs and could be given any old figures out of thin air.

"He would listen to them very attentively, calmly and patiently. And then he would ask the speakers questions that completely floored them and made them wonder: was he that smart, or did he really know the work and wanted to test them? Before long the specialists drew the conclusion that Kalinin always made a detailed study of a question before calling anyone in to report on it."

That was the way Kalinin worked. He always analyzed every question in great detail himself without relying on the opinion of others, however authoritative. At the same time he trusted people, and liked to learn from them as well as to teach them.

The problems and affairs handled at the Commissariat were concrete and down-to-earth. Here are a few examples. At Kalinin's suggestion a Decree on the Provision of Land for Truck Gardening and the Protection of Crops and Plants was passed. Among other things it said:

"Owing to the disorganization of transportation and the necessity of providing Petrograd with locally grown vegetables, the Council of Commissars of the Petrograd Labor Commune has decided temporarily, for the duration of the year 1918:

1. To immediately place under its protection all plots of vegetable, berry and fruit crops and also the beehives.

2. To give the Central Agricultural Council under the Petrograd Commissariat for Municipal Affairs the right to draw up a list of the hothouses and seedbeds, farm tools, fertilizer, sowing and planting material, farm buildings and other garden and farm equipment which formerly belonged to the tsar and nobility, the monasteries and private persons, and the right to use such of these as are available when the need arises."

Another decree of the Commissariat said:

"To make it easier for the poorest of the population of the city of Petrograd to use electricity for lighting their apartments, a Bureau for the Electrification of the Apartments of the Poorest Part of the Population of the City of Petrograd and its Environs is to be set up under the Commissariat for Municipal Affairs..."

While working in the Commissariat, Kalinin did not confine himself to matters relating to Petrograd. He helped the neighboring provinces to get their communal services running smoothly. At his suggestion, the departments of communal affairs of the Northern Region held their first congress early in 1919, during which they were able to share with one another their experience of work and map out methods of coordinating their efforts.

Little had changed during this period in the life of Mikhail Kalinin. He still spent most of his time at work, or on trips to the factories and other organizations. The Kalinin apartment was just as modest as that of his fellow workers.

But those years of work in the Duma and the Commissariat for Municipal Affairs formed a very important landmark in his biography as a Communist and a leader. It was then, under the trying conditions of the struggle against counter-revolution, hunger and ruin, that the true Soviet style of work evolved under the guidance of Vladimir Lenin, a style of work in which concern for the well-being of the working man and his needs was uppermost. And Mikhail Kalinin was one of its earliest promoters.

VI. A Worker President

Yakov Sverdlov, a prominent organizer and builder of the Communist Party and Soviet state and chairman of the highest legislative body of the country, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (VTSIK), died in March 1919.

On meeting Kalinin, Lenin informed him that he had recommended him as Sverdlov's successor. The news came as a surprise to Kalinin. He expressed doubts as to whether he was equal to that responsible post. Lenin reassured him.

On March 30, VTSIK met in session. The Political Bureau of the Central Committee advised the Bolshevik faction to vote for Kalinin in the elections of chairman. In his speech supporting Kalinin's candidacy, Lenin said:

"The question of the attitude to the middle peasants is a more acute problem for us than for our comrades in Europe, and we must make sure that we have at the head of the Soviet state a comrade who can demonstrate that our decision in this matter will really be carried out. . .

"We know that we can solve this problem if we find a comrade with the necessary experience and knowledge of the life of the middle peasants, and I believe that the candidacy of which you read in today's papers meets all these requirements. This is the candidacy of Comrade Kalinin.

"Here we have a comrade who has been engaged in Party work for nearly twenty years. He is a peasant from Tver Guberniya, who has close connections with peasant farming, which he constantly renews and freshens. Petrograd workers have witnessed his ability to approach wide sections of the working masses who had had no Party experience; where other propagandists and agitators failed to find the right, comradely approach to them, Comrade Kalinin succeeded. All this is especially important at the present time."

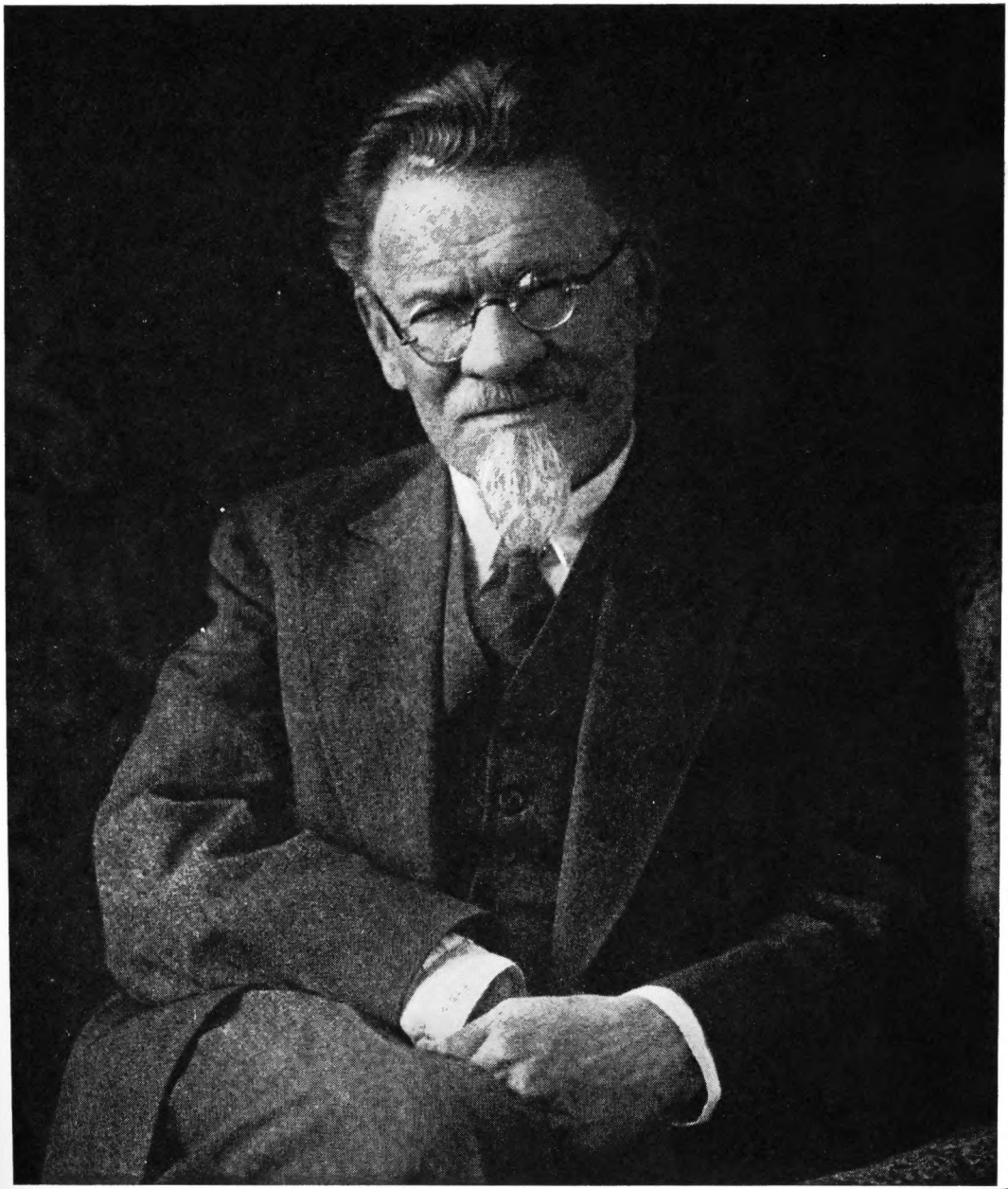
In that short and striking speech, Lenin fittingly characterized the comrade he was naming for that high government post.

Kalinin was elected unanimously. A Tver peasant and Petrograd worker became the President of Soviet Russia.

Who better than Kalinin knew what a tremendous responsibility he was assuming?

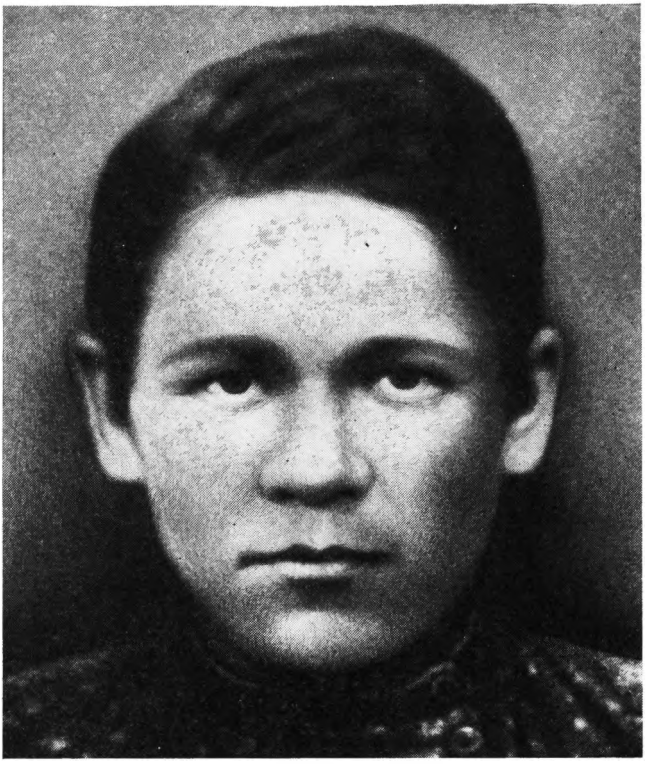
On April 9, 1919, he addressed a meeting of VTSIK and outlined the immediate tasks before the supreme executive body of the republic. Thanking the members of VTSIK for the confidence they had shown him, he said: "I interpret that confidence as the confidence of the masses of Russian workers and peasants in the revolutionary proletariat of Petrograd. . . I regard my election as a symbol of the close alliance of the peasants and the workers, for in my person are united a Petrograd worker and a Tver peasant.

"Fully aware of the tremendous responsibility history has placed upon us, we firmly believe that the masses of workers and peasants, who are keeping in close contact with us and who determine our activity, will see the cause of



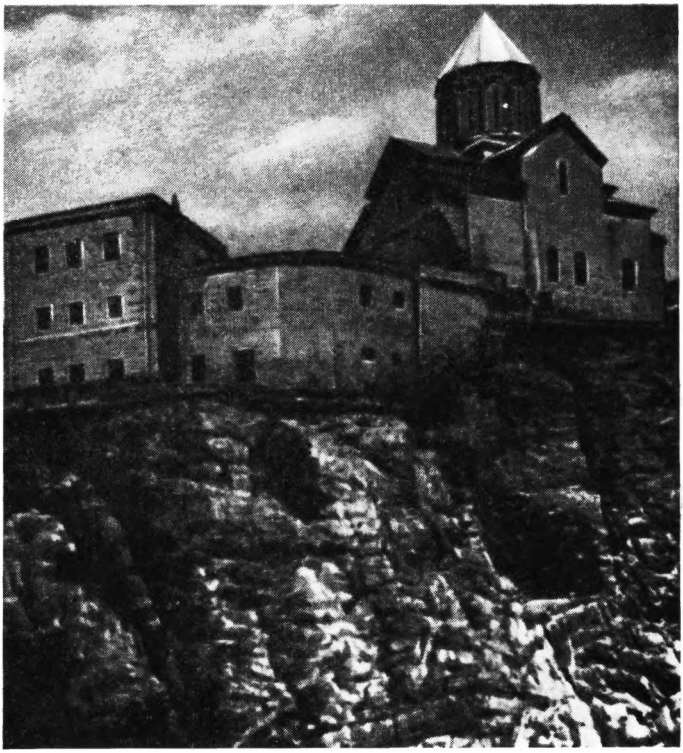
Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin.

Mikhail Kalinin in 1885.

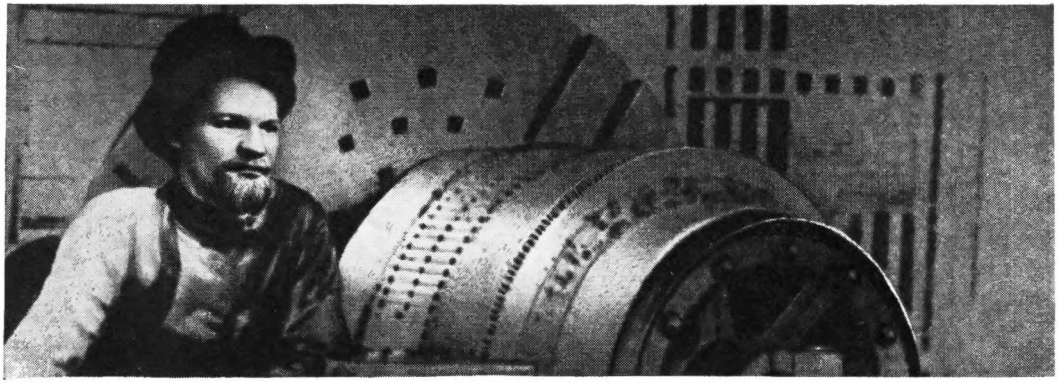


Mikhail Kalinin in 1889.

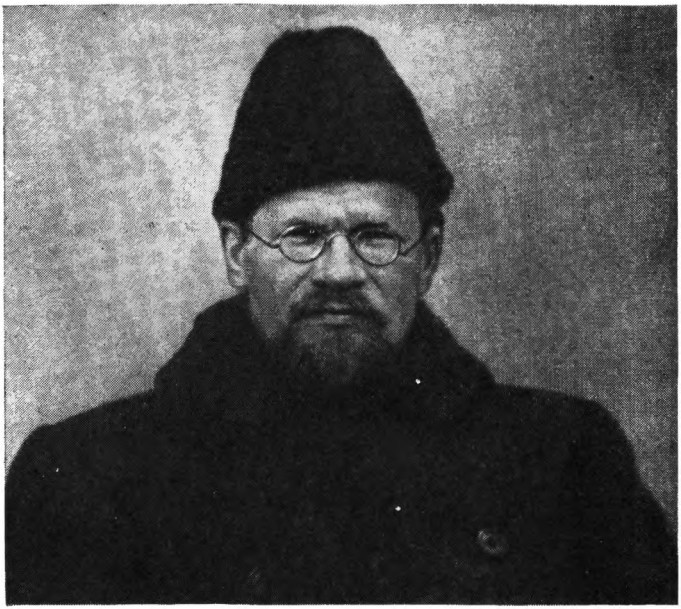
Members of a revolutionary workers' circle which Kalinin organized at the Putilov Plant (left to right): A. A. Mitrevich, I. D. Kushnikov, I. D. Ivanov, 1898 or 1899.



Metekhi fortress in Tiflis (now Tbilisi) where Kalinin was imprisoned in December 1900 for his revolutionary activities.



Kalinin at the Volta Works in Revel (now Tallinn), 1903.



Kalinin in 1904.

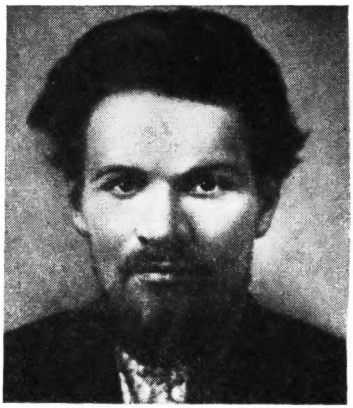
"Kalinin (centre) taken to his place of exile in Olonets Guberniya". Painting by A. T. Danilichev.

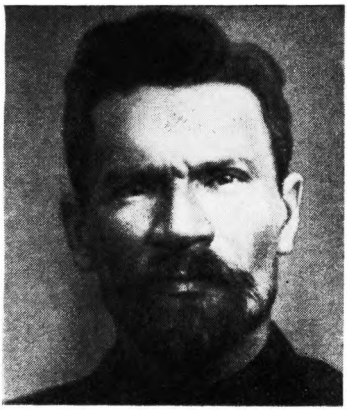
"Kalinin speaking at the 4th (Unity) Congress of the RSDLP, Stockholm, April 1906". Painting by L. I. Volshtein.

Yekaterina Lorberg, Kalinin's wife.

Kalinin with wife and son Valerian, 1908.

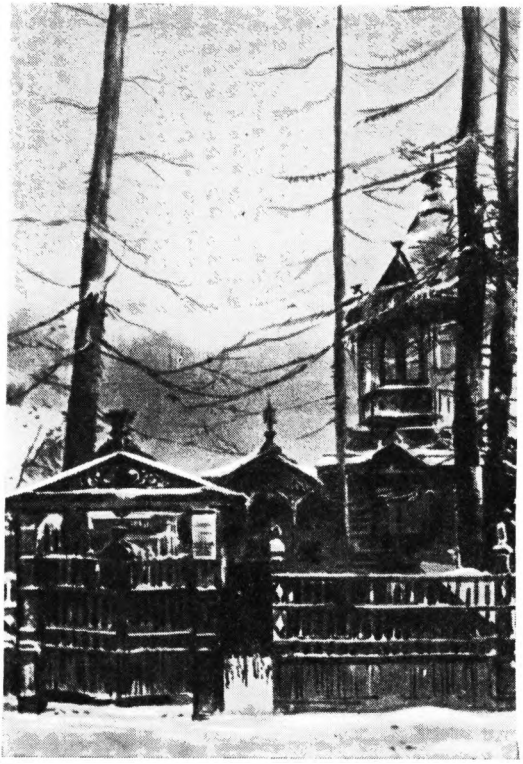
Kalinin during his period of work in Moscow, 1908.



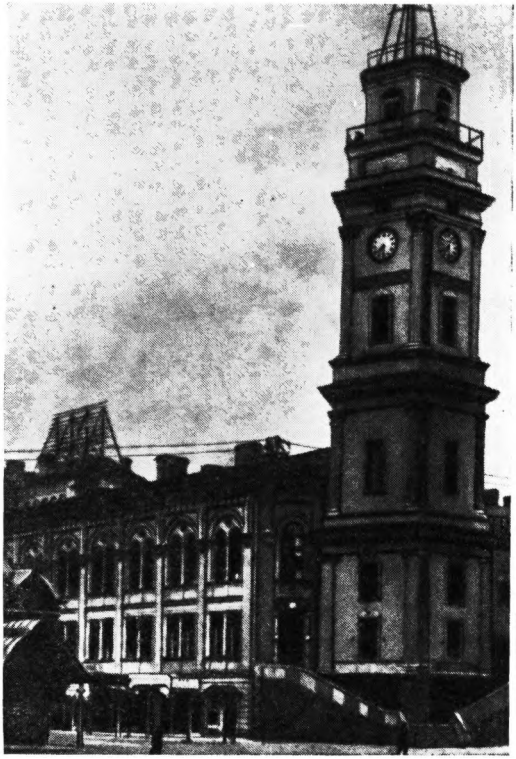


Kalinin became a prominent Party leader; he was a member of the St. Petersburg RSDLP Committee and candidate member of the RSDLP Central Committee. Photo of 1912.

Building of the Lesnovsky-Udelninsky District Duma where an enlarged meeting of the RSDLP(B) was held on October 16, 1917. The meeting marked an important stage in the preparation for the October Revolution.



Building of the Petrograd City Duma of which Kalinin became the head in November 1917.



Kalinin presides over a sitting of the Petrograd Duma Executive, 1918.

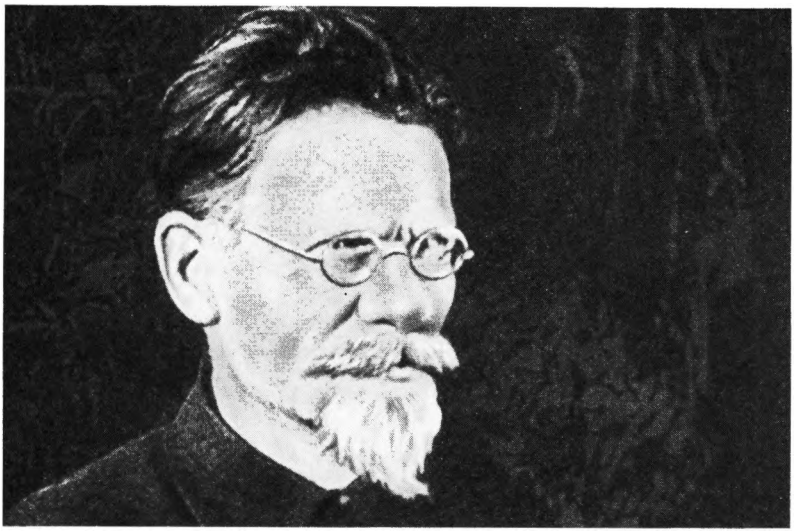
Lenin and Kalinin, 1919.

Kalinin with peasants of the village of Arapovo, Tambov Guberniya, May 1919.

Kalinin addressing a meeting of the men and officers of the 1st Cavalry Army near Uman, May 1920.

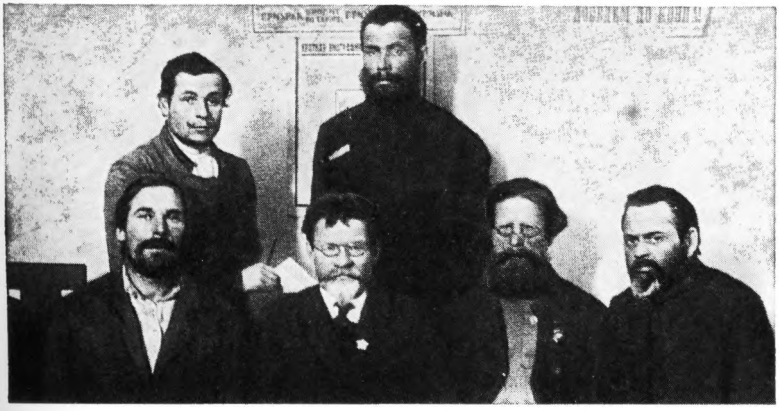
M. I. Kalinin, Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, and G. I. Petrovsky (second from right), Chairman of the All-Ukraine Central Executive Committee, taking part in a subbotnik (volunteer unpaid work) in Kharkov, March 1920.

Kalinin and Voroshilov in the first Soviet-made car, October 1922.



Kalinin at Lenin's funeral held at the Hall of Columns in Moscow, January 1924.

Kalinin receives Greek Ambassador Mavroudis. On extreme left is G. V. Chicherin, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.



Kalinin with peasants, Moscow. 1925.

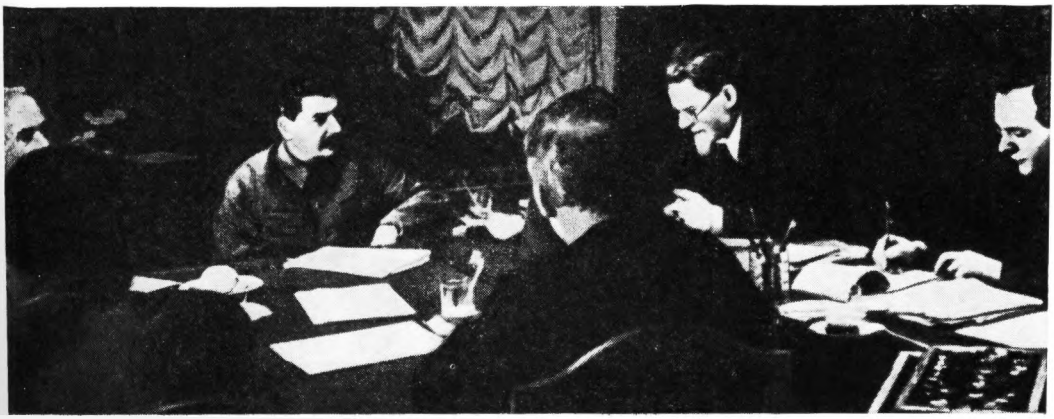
Kalinin addressing a meeting to celebrate the commissioning of Dneproges, the first major hydropower station in the Soviet Union. October 10, 1932.

G. I. Petrovsky presents the Order of Lenin to Kalinin on his 60th birthday, November 20, 1935.

M. I. Kalinin and G. K. Ordzhonikidze at a meeting of the 1st All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites—initiators of the drive for higher labour productivity, November 1935.

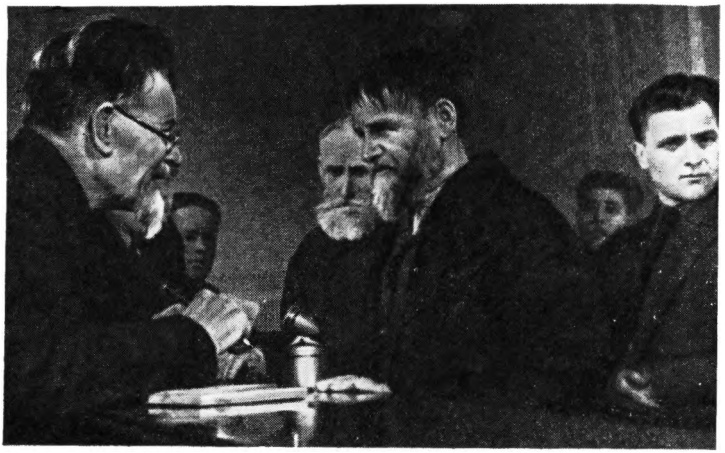
Kalinin with members of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, 1935.

The first sitting of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of which Kalinin was the chairman, January 1938.



Kalinin with actors who have received government awards, 1938.

Kalinin with Spanish workers, 1938.



In Kalinin's reception room, 1939.

Kalinin in his study, 1939.

Kalinin with daughter Julia and grandchildren, 1939.

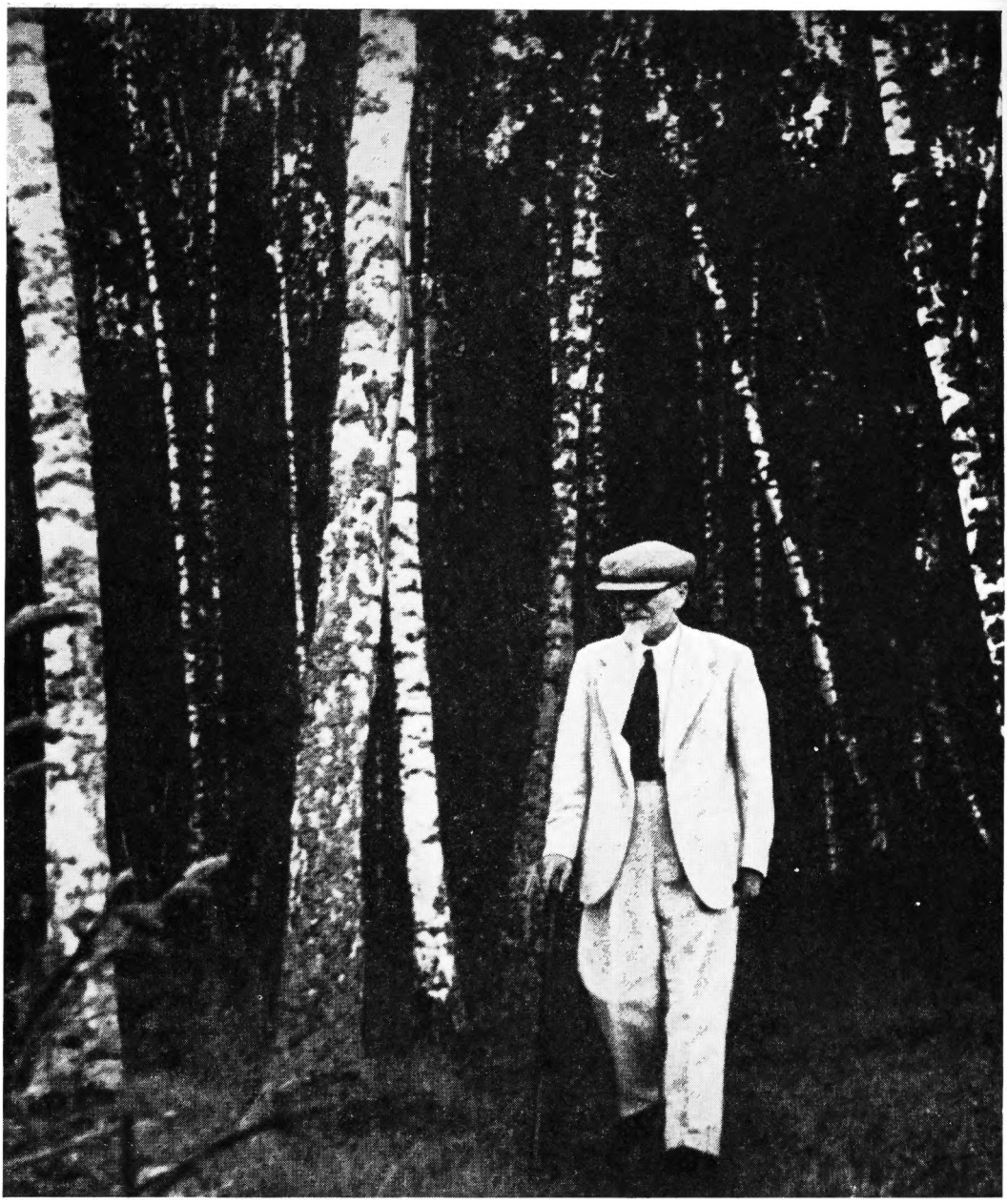
Kalinin with Red Army men, May 1940.

Kalinin took on many responsibilities during the war against the Nazi invaders (1941-45). In spite of his age and poor health he frequently visited the front and travelled to many parts of the country. Here he is addressing the men of the Guards Cavalry Corps, April 25, 1942.

Kalinin talking with farmers of the village of Gorodnya, Kalinin Region, which had been liberated from the Nazis, 1942.

Kalinin spared neither time, effort nor health for the sake of victory. His inspiring newspaper articles and radio broadcasts gave new strength to Soviet people. This meeting with artists working on posters was held in December 1942.

Kalinin with children at the Artek Young Pioneer Camp in the Crimea, 1945.



Until his very last day Kalinin continued to work giving to people his experience and knowledge, his very heart.

the socialist revolution through to final victory.

"True, we are now going through the most crucial period of our struggle against the bourgeoisie, a period which calls for an incredible effort on our part."

In a difficult period for the young Soviet state did Mikhail Kalinin's career as a statesman begin.

During the preceding year, 1918, the Soviet republic had been encircled by a veritable ring of fire. A British force was landed in Murmansk in March 1918. It was followed by American and French troops. In April the Japanese interventionists landed their troops in Vladivostok. By May the German Army had occupied the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic republics and parts of the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia.

This intervention bolstered the hopes of the internal counter-revolution. The Whiteguard General Krasnov formed an army of kulaks and rich Cossacks and staged a counter-revolutionary uprising in the Don area. Other Whiteguard generals and atamans turned their guns on the young republic.

The interventionists and Whiteguards occupied a number of highly important economic areas of the country.

All the people rallied to the defense of the republic. Thousands of workers, Party and non-Party, shouldered arms in Petrograd, Moscow and other cities. The Council of People's Commissars called for mobilization. Quite a few former tsarist officers and even generals volunteered to go to the front on the side of the Red Army.

A special body, the Workers' and Peasants' Defense Council, with Lenin at its head, was set up to direct the whole defense effort.

The commanders and men of the Red Army displayed remarkable courage and heroism, engaging the enemy in fierce battles and defeating them, though armed and equipped far worse than the armies of the interventionists or of the Whiteguards, who were getting supplies from abroad.

The revolution in Germany of November 1918 and subsequent capitulation of the countries of the Triple Alliance enabled the Entente countries to intensify their intervention against Soviet Russia.

By the beginning of 1919, fourteen imperialist states had launched a joint campaign against the Soviet republic. With the help of the Whiteguards, they meant to crush the state of the working people. The imperialist Entente relied mainly on the former tsarist military commander, Admiral Kolchak, who by the spring of 1919 had an army of 300,000 under his command. They were unsparing of arms and equipment for his army, supplying him with 700,000 rifles, over 3,000 machine guns, 530 artillery guns, and millions of shells and cartridges.

Kolchak was proclaimed the supreme ruler of Russia. Meanwhile another former tsarist military commander, general Denikin, was heading for Moscow, while Yudenich was preparing to attack Petrograd.

Such was the situation in the country when Kalinin became the Chairman of VTSIK. He tackled his duties with his habitual energy and his confidence in the victory of the revolution. This important state work did not keep him from maintaining regular contacts with the workers in the factories, speaking at rallies and gatherings, meeting and talking with people.

He was often away from the capital. At Lenin's suggestion propaganda trains were formed and despatched to various parts of the country. With them went the best propagandists and agitators of the Party. VTSIK had a special propaganda train whose name "The October Revolution Train" is now part of the history of the Land of Soviets. The Party placed Kalinin in charge of it.

It was a most unusual train—actually a club, library, cinema, bookshop, printshop and an editorial office all in one.

Its mission was explained by Kalinin in the course of an interview he gave to the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia:* "What I want to do mainly is go to the small districts and get to know the working people who live far from the capital and find out what their needs are. I want to listen to the voice of life itself. . .

"The guberniyas we intend to pass through are near the Kolchak front, and political work in those localities is particularly important. The arrival of propagandists from the capital, the meetings we plan to hold locally, the distribution of literature, placards, appeals, the demonstration of Soviet films, and simply contacts with representatives of the central workers' and peasants' government should raise the spirits of the people and disperse the doubts planted in their minds by the agents of Kolchak."

The propaganda teams who travelled in that train included many workers holding responsible posts in the Central Committees of the Party and the Komsomol, and of the Commissariats, and, on some trips, even the People's Commissars themselves: A. Lunacharsky, People's Commissar for Education, N. Semashko, People's Commissar for Public Health, D. Kursky, People's Commissar for Justice, and so on.

The trips on that revolutionary propaganda train were long and exhausting. It called at scores of cities and villages, making long stops at each place. Thousands of people gathered to hear words of truth. Sometimes they were bitter words about the difficult straits in which the country found itself, the hardships at the front, the lack of food and clothing. Kalinin did not conceal the truth. He was confident that he would be understood correctly. And he was.

"VTSIK on Wheels"

Of the seventy or so meetings that were held by these propagandists, more than forty were addressed by the Chairman of VTSIK.

The fact that he travelled to remote towns and hamlets was in itself good propaganda for the Soviet government and its gains. But Kalinin did not content himself with that. He resolved many concrete questions in the localities, gave practical advice and instructions to local administrators, and held meetings and received visitors.

His first trip on "The October Revolution Train" lasted more than two weeks. He returned to Moscow in the middle of May and then, at last, he was able to make a journey to Verkhnyaya Troitsa.

He found the situation in the village of his birth disheartening. The land was neglected; there was no farm equipment and not every household had even a horse. For hours he talked to the peasants. He was showered with questions.

Yet from all they said it was clear that his fellow villagers had accepted Soviet rule in their heart of hearts, and were prepared to fight for it to the victorious end against the Whiteguards and foreign interventionists.

He returned to Moscow in a good mood.

Then came other trips, now to the Western, Southern and Eastern Fronts.

Between May 1919 and December 1920, "The October Revolution Train" spent 272 days on the road; in that time it called at 260 cities, small towns and villages, gave practical aid to more than 1,250 institutions and organizations and held hundreds of meetings with local workers. The people nicknamed Kalinin's train "VTSIK on wheels".

"I am travelling around the cities and districts of Russia," said Kalinin in one of his interviews, "in order, on the one

hand, to ascertain to what an extent our new regime has taken hold there, and, on the other, to rectify the state of enormous confusion which continues to exist in one sphere or another of our life."

Kalinin learned a great deal on these trips. Direct contacts with the people enabled him to bring to light many problems of state-wide significance. The political results of his trips were tremendous. In some localities, as for instance the Western Territory, the staff of the train in effect laid the foundations of Soviet government.

Hardly more than six months had passed after his election as Chairman of VTSIK when Lenin, speaking at the First All-Russia Conference on Party Work in the Countryside, said:

"Thanks to Comrade Kalinin our work in the countryside has gained considerable momentum. The peasant is now undoubtedly in a position to keep in closer contact with the Soviet government through Comrade Kalinin, who represents the supreme authority of the Soviet republic."

During his trips Kalinin gave the peasants his particular attention, discussing with them the problems most on their minds and making the Party's policy with regard to the middle peasant understandable and acceptable to them. He had a knack of turning his meetings in the villages into a frank sharing of opinions. "The peasants and I do not just talk and say pleasant nothings to each other," he wrote. "Both they and I are moved by a strong desire to convince each other."

His Unusual Meeting with Budenny

And the Red Army also received much of Kalinin's attention, the young Red Army then waging stubborn and sanguinary battles against the Whiteguards. He was regularly seen on the fronts of the Civil War, and often stopped off for talks with the men of the First Cavalry Army commanded by Semyon Budenny. At a meeting on the occasion of the presentation of banners with the Order of the Red Banner to the units which had distinguished themselves in battle, Kalinin made his memorable speech "What Is a Communist?" We shall return to that speech later. At this point we want to tell you how in 1919 Kalinin was "delivered" into Budenny's hands.

Budenny later retold the incident as follows:

"On the morning of November 4 I was setting out for the 4th division when I was detained by the arrival of unexpected guests.

"A sleigh rode into the yard of the house in the village of Stadnitsa which we were using as headquarters. The sleigh was being dragged wearily over the snow by two scraggy horses. There was a cavalryman riding in its van and a second bringing up the rear. The first rider jumped to the ground and after exchanging a few words with his companion directed his steps towards the headquarters.

"There were two men seated in the sleigh. One made as if to rise, but on hearing the second horseman's stern 'Keep your seat!' extended his arms in a gesture of helplessness and resumed his seat.

"In a minute the door banged open and the first cavalryman was reporting:

" 'Comrade commander, the patrol of the 2nd brigade, 6th division has brought in two bourgeois... merchants, I guess.'

" 'Who are they? What kind of bourgeois?'

" 'The usual kind. They were running away from Voronezh to the Whiteguards when we caught them.'

" 'And what do you think I want with them? Why didn't you take them to your brigade commander or the division chief?'

" 'We sure would have, we know the rules. In fact, we'd have finished them off ourselves if they weren't acting so queer. "Take us to Budenny", they kept on. One of them says he's the chairman of Russia and the other–the chairman of the Ukraine. They talked our ears off with their propaganda.'

" 'Well, you'd better show them in and let me see who you've got there.'

"The detained men were wrapped in long fur coats cut in merchant style. 'Mensheviks' I told myself, looking at the man in front wearing spectacles and a pointed beard. He took off his misty glasses and wiped them with the end of his muffler. Handing his documents to Commissar Kivchele, he regarded me with a fixed, penetrating gaze. The Commissar leaped to my side and pointed in silence to the signature on his mandate: Ulyanov (Lenin).

"Before us stood the Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, and the Chairman of the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, Grigori Ivanovich Petrovsky.

"I introduced myself to the visitors and apologized for the rude reception.

" 'Never mind,' said Kalinin with a friendly smile. 'Everything's all right now that Grigori Ivanovich and I are safe at last from the cold and your brave men. "Take off your fur coats", they ordered. "They've warmed you long enough and you won't need them any more where you're going; you can enter the kingdom of heaven in what you were born in." I was too frozen to move,' laughed Kalinin, 'but Grigori Ivanovich took out his mandate and showed it to one of them: "Here, read this, it's signed by Lenin." "Don't you sully the name of Lenin, you bourgy," snapped your man. "I can't read but I've seen the likes of you exploiters before." And the second patrol put in: "We're wasting our time jabbering with these counter-revs; just knock'em off and get rid of'em, or we'll fall way behind the rest of our troops." "No, brothers," I told them, "there's no hurry. The shooting can wait a while. Take us to Budenny first. He'll tell you who we are.' "

" 'Please accept my apologies again, Comrade Kalinin,' said I. 'Who would have thought such a thing could happen? The men will be punished.'

" 'Nonsense, my good fellow', objected Kalinin. 'The fault is all ours. We should have taken a guard with us from Voronezh. Actually, we owe your men thanks. In this weather we might easily have blundered into the hands of the Whiteguards but for your patrol.'

"And so we treated our guests to some hot tea and a glass of vodka in honor of their arrival. Mikhail Ivanovich and Grigori Ivanovich were entitled to the treat, for both of them were frozen.

"Kalinin told us about conditions throughout the republic: the ruin, hunger, lack of fuel and kerosene, even of matches. To suit his words, he took from his pocket three slices of dry black bread and a piece of sugar, neatly wrapped in newspaper.

" 'And in spite of it all', he said, 'our workers and revolutionary peasants are quite determined to defend Soviet rule to the last breath. Because it is theirs, and they know it, and will fight for it, till we win. Grigori Ivanovich and I are here to make sure that you do.' "

Kalinin again visited Budenny's army on the 28th of May, 1920. That was when he made the speech in which he spoke of his Party comrades and the struggle they were waging, and explained to the men the meaning of the new word, "Communist," which had entered their lives together with the revolution.

"Communists are the finest representatives of the working classes, the finest re-

presentatives of the worker and peasant masses," he said. "Communists have no special creeds; all they want is that there should be no people who work all their lives only to live in poverty and to die homeless, while others are idle all their lives but enjoy all the good things of this earth. Communists cannot accept such a state of affairs. They want all people to be equal under the sun. . ."

The men listened attentively to the words of the President of Russia. He continued:

"Our road has been hard, and we are tired. There is not an honest man in the Russian Soviet Republic who is not tired. Only rascals, speculators, deserters can rest now, only the kind of men who do not care about the suffering of our great people. . .

"The goal we are fighting for does not allow of a moment's rest, and what rest can there be at a time when the goal is so near, when we can already see the frontier beyond which our victory is assured."

His trips to the army in the field raised its fighting spirit and helped it to win. On the tenth anniversary of Kalinin's chairmanship of VTSIK, Kliment Voroshilov, People's Commissar for the Army and the Navy, paid him this tribute:

"The old soldiers, commanders and political workers, glorious veterans of the Civil War, well remember how you appeared at the most trying moments at various sectors of the far-flung front, inspiring and cheering them with your simple and warm and sincere words. Your personal presence invariably raised and strengthened the fighting spirit of the Red Army. During those trips your life was in danger more than once. . . You did your duty modestly and simply but all your work on the fronts was a heroic exploit calling for supreme courage and self-sacrifice."

Save the Grain Harvest!

"VTSIK on Wheels" continued its trips around the country, and now its course lay to the south and the Volga area. Kalinin got off the train and boarded a ship which took him to many villages. The shortage of bread in the country was becoming critical, while good crop was grown on the steppes of the Volga in the summer of 1919. But there were not enough hands to take it in. Although the time had come to harvest them the stands of wheat stood untouched. Before long the precious golden grains would fall to the ground and be lost.

Such a loss was impermissible. Kalinin sent an urgent telegram to Lenin.

"There's a rich crop in the Atkar District. It must be harvested within the coming week at the latest. There aren't enough people here to do that. The Atkar army units must be sent in to help with the harvesting. Otherwise part of the crop will perish. Please take immediate steps and let me know at once."

The answer came within a few hours. Lenin ordered all the farm equipment still not in use to be put to the harvesting without delay and the people of the towns and villages to be mobilized for the work of taking in the crop on time.

The work got into full swing. Equipment was checked and people were brought in from neighboring districts and assigned to the plots. Kalinin worked without a let-up, literally going without sleep. He organized the harvesting quickly and soon the grain was on its way to the fronts.

That was only one of thousands of episodes which, like the tiny particles of a mosaic that together form a majestic pattern, give us a picture of Kalinin's activity as Chairman of the All-Russia Cent-

ral Executive Committee during the early years of Soviet Government. It strikingly illustrates his style and method of work. He hated empty phrases and abstract decisions. He was always personally involved in everything that was happening around him; he decided the problems that arose concretely, keeping all the more clearly in mind the tasks of the state as a whole.

While Kalinin was still travelling along the Volga, trainloads of grain began to move towards the fronts and industrial areas of the country. That was the concrete result of the activity of "VTSIK on Wheels".

In the autumn of 1919, Kalinin undertook his fourth and most protracted trip which took him through Tula, Penza, Samara and Orenburg. He addressed a meeting of the Kolchak men who had been taken prisoner, and he succeeded in opening the eyes of those deceived men who had been misled into turning their guns on the Soviet government. He spoke long. At the end of the meeting the men adopted a resolution saying: "From now on we shall march with guns in hand at the side of all the workers and peasants against the rich blood-suckers of the world."

On his return to Moscow from this trip, Kalinin reported to the members of VTSIK on what he had seen and the conclusion he had reached–namely, that a tremendous process was taking place in Soviet Russia, a process of consolidation of the influence of Soviet power and realization of its necessity among the great masses of workers and peasants and even the middle class. The peasants supported the Soviet decrees which became guidelines for their activity. All that bore witness to the inevitable forward movement of the socialist revolution.

Life itself has borne out this conclusion of Kalinin's.

On the Southern Front

The next day Kalinin was off again. This time the train took him to the Southern Front, where the Red Army had launched a fierce offensive against Denikin's army. It was during this trip that the unusual meeting between Kalinin and Budenny described earlier took place.

Again there were many military, economic and food problems waiting to be solved and meetings to address.

On his return to the capital, Kalinin went to see Lenin. Later he described their meeting as follows:

"As soon as I got back I went to Lenin's office. He came rushing in, rubbing his forehead with his hand and smiling. 'Well, and how are things? Bad?' He was looking at me warily and searchingly and at the same time his eyes seemed to glow with expectation. 'No,' said I, 'the situation at the front is better than it has ever been, Vladimir Ilyich. Everybody is sure that Denikin is as good as done for. The fighting spirit of the men is splendid. There's no cause for worry.' You should have seen how Lenin's face lighted up with joy and elation. 'Splendid, splendid, Comrade Kalinin! Things are clearing up!' "

Kalinin's last trip in the grim and heroic year of 1919 was to Petrograd, where the Red Army had smashed the army of General Yudenich at the approaches to the city.

The welcome accorded him in the city where he was received by the workers as one of themselves was very warm–as in fact was the case wherever he went. His trips around the country, during which he brilliantly proved his gifts as a statesman of major stature, his daily contacts with people, to everyone speaking simply and sincerely, his high principles and Bolshevik dedication to the cause, and his human warmth and at the same

time strictness made him a highly esteemed and a most popular figure throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union.

The Threat of Famine

The first socialist state in the world had passed the severe test of the Civil War. Russia, exhausted and impoverished, whom some Western observers saw with the eyes of the eminent author Herbert G. Wells as being immersed in darkness, was bravely clearing a road to the future and leading its millions of citizens to a brighter, happier life.

It was yet to be put to further trials, and one of the worst was the approaching famine caused by the foreign military intervention and the Civil War. That cruel and merciless foe was moving on thirty-four provinces with about thirty million inhabitants.

At this time of great trial in 1921, the Party appointed Mikhail Kalinin the head of the special Famine Relief Committee it had set up.

The work of the Committee was complicated by the kulak disturbances that were breaking out in many districts. The enemies of the Soviet government were inciting the peasants who were disgruntled over the food surplus requisitioning system * introduced during the Civil War. The hardships of the war period had also affected the mood of a section of the working class.

Of the vast complex of problems confronting the Bolsheviks at this time, one of the most urgent was hunger. Again the tried and tested Leninist Kalinin was enlisted to help resolve it. In that connection, he said:

"Until the Samara and Saratov peasant gets enough to eat there can be no question, of course, of any substantial economic progress. Therefore we regard the battle against hunger as an essential link in our whole economic program."

In March 1921, after the Tenth Party Congress, VTSIK passed a decree abolishing the food surplus requisitioning system and introducing in its stead a tax in kind. That did much to relieve the tension in the countryside. But a very dry summer was disastrously threatening the country's food balance.

The Famine Relief Committee appealed to the workers and peasants to help the hungry. Its appeal was heeded, and not only in Russia. Many progressive public figures in other countries responded to it, and one of the first was the famous Polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen of Norway. On behalf of the International Red Cross he came to Russia and toured the famine areas.

Upon his return Nansen appealed to the governments of many countries to do something for the population of the disaster areas, but they were deaf to his pleas. Nansen himself donated practically all his savings to the Famine Relief Fund.

At the Ninth All-Russia Congress of Soviets which met in 1921, Kalinin proposed that a message of thanks be sent to the Norwegian scientist for his generous act. "The Russian people," it said, "will always remember the name of the great scientist, explorer and citizen F. Nansen, who succeeded in heroically cutting a trail through the eternal ice of the frozen North, but could not prevail over the extreme cruelty, selfishness and indifference of the ruling classes of the capitalist world."

An enormous, seemingly impossible task faced the Soviet government. It needed millions of poods of grain to feed

* Under the decree on the food surplus requisitioning system, the farming provinces were each to deliver a set amount of grain and fodder to the state for the satisfaction of its needs, and they were allowed to keep a minimum for their own use.

the hungry, and millions more to sow the fields left barren by the drought. All that had to be done at a time when there was a critical shortage of transportation facilities, fuel and other resources.

And so "The October Revolution Train" went off on another journey. Terrible scenes of suffering confronted its passengers. Kalinin gathered together the activists in the disaster provinces and district centers and simply said, without offering them words of comfort or promises:

"The situation is extremely bad and we cannot let it go on any longer."

"We are hoping the central government will come to our aid," came the answer.

"Comrades, grain does not grow in Moscow. We shall give you some help but it will not be enough. We must do everything in our power to find additional internal reserves and use them wisely. Well, let's sit down and see what we have."

They sat down together, drew up estimates and plans—and found a way out.

To the peasants Kalinin spoke as one who knew their lot at first hand. He assured them:

"We'll get through this if we all go at it together."

A huge program of measures was inaugurated in record time under Kalinin's immediate direction. More than forty million poods of grain seed were delivered to the famine provinces. Millions of people were fed in specially organized public dining rooms.

Reporting to the Party on the work done, Kalinin thus had every reason to say: "We have saved about ten million people from death by starvation, and probably several million, comrades, have recovered sufficiently to be able to work or have remained useful members of our Soviet republic."

In that time of great trial for the Party and the country, Kalinin again played an outstanding role thanks to his brilliant organizational talent and skill as a propagandist. A better choice to head the Famine Relief Committee could hardly have been found.

Those who had worked with Kalinin for many years stressed his gift for persuading and convincing others. He was ready to talk to one and the same person several times if only he could convince him of the correctness of the policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, and rid him of his mistaken views. He rarely resorted to reprimands or punishment, and then only in extreme cases. He believed in the power of the kind word, and he believed in Man.

VII. An Invincible Union

Very hard indeed were the first years of peace in Soviet Russia. The Party and the state were confronted with the difficult tasks of restoring industry, agriculture, transport, of stimulating trade between the towns and the villages. The Tenth Congress of the RCP(B) adopted a decision to go over to the New Economic Policy, NEP. The main principles of this policy were outlined by Lenin as early as the beginning of 1918, in his *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government,* but its implementation was prevented by the Civil War and intervention.

NEP met the objective requirements of the country's economic development.

The first step under the New Economic Policy was to substitute a tax in kind for the food surplus requisitioning system; the size of the tax was made dependent on the amount of land and number of dependents in each peasant household and even on the size of its harvest.

The second step was the legalization of free trade in farm products and manufactured goods. Private capital was permitted in trade. That was one of the basic differences between the New Economic Policy and the period of War Communism, when free trade was banned.

The change to NEP made it possible to reanimate the country's economic life. Speaking at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922, Lenin observed that the results of the first year of NEP had proved the correctness of the decision adopted by the previous Congress. The Eleventh Congress was the last Party Congress in which Lenin participated. He was soon stricken down by serious illness.

The Fight Against Economic Ruin

The situation concerning the national economy was still grave. Describing it in one of his speeches, Kalinin said:

"Studying our position at the present moment, we find in the Soviet republic the most extreme economic ruin... And now that we are faced with such a dangerous state of economic ruin we have but one task and that is to overcome the ruin."

Kalinin then started a broad campaign to explain to the people the New Economic Policy of the Party, a policy its enemies were trying to misrepresent as a return to the old bourgeois system. Under his direction the central and local governing and economic bodies began to improve their work.

As always, Kalinin continued to travel extensively around the country, talking to workers, peasants, Red Army men. He spoke of the things that were on people's minds, but above all he stressed the thought that the respite the country had now received in its struggle for the new life was not a time of rest.

"The young working class which in alliance with the peasant masses has taken power still has a tremendous job to do... We have begun to build a new life and we will finish the job... We must bring into being a communist world."

Explaining why it was necessary for everyone to work selflessly and for the whole nation to take part in the restoration of the economy, he said:

"Communism will not be handed to us on a platter covered with a fancy napkin. To build communism we'll have to roll up our sleeves, pick up a hammer and get down to the new rewarding job. It will take a lot of energy, will power, ability, and comradely discipline. But I think, comrades, that we, who have successfully coped with our first task and smashed the bourgeoisie, will successfully cope with the second task of building the new life."

The Formation of the USSR

Recovery from economic ruin required more than just enthusiasm, however. It called for the uniting of the economic, political and military resources of all four Soviet republics. Time itself had placed the question of the creation of a stable fraternal union of those republics on the agenda. That question was brought up at the Tenth All-Russia Congress of Soviets where Joseph Stalin delivered a report. At this Congress the new form of union suggested by Lenin—a voluntary and equal union of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Transcaucasian Federation and the RSFSR—was endorsed, and thus the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics came into being. The proclamation of the new state formation, the USSR, took place on December 30, 1922, at the First All-Union Congress of Soviets.

Mikhail Kalinin had a very immediate part in the preparations for that Congress and the work of uniting the fraternal republics.

The Congress adopted a Declaration on the Formation of the USSR and elected its supreme legislative body, the Central Executive Committee (TSIK) of the USSR. Lenin was elected the head of the government or Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. That is how the multi-national Soviet socialist state was born.

In closing the Congress, Kalinin said to the delegates:

"I am sure that the work we have accomplished today will leave its mark on the minds of the working class of the whole world. I do not doubt that the new forms we have basically outlined today are imperfect, and can be improved in the future. But the important thing is that we have laid the first brick. To make a start, to lay the foundation is the hardest. Today four Soviet independent republics have laid the foundation. I am confident that with the support of the working people the success of the work we have started will be ensured."

The delegates greeted these words with an ovation.

Mikhail Kalinin was elected the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. Thus he became the first President of the Soviet Union. He also retained his position as Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

The new year of 1923 began for Kalinin in the customary way, with further trips around the country. He went to Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Baku, Ryazan. In spring he took off for the North Caucasus. The program of these trips was the same: deeper acquaintance with the life of the country, help to Soviet government organizations on the spot, propaganda directed at strengthening the young multi-national state.

Then began active preparations for the Twelfth Party Congress of 1923, which was to take up the question of the state's tax policy in the countryside. Thousands of talks with the peasants and his personal participation in carrying out changes in the village—all served to strengthen his arguments concerning the fundamental aspects of the problem and sub-

stantiate his conclusions on this pressing problem. Those conclusions were discussed and approved by the Congress. It then adopted a number of important decisions as a result of which all direct state taxes were replaced by a single direct farm tax. The main tax burden fell on the well-to-do peasants, while the poorest sections of the villagers were completely exempted from taxation.

A Reply to the White Emigrees

Among Kalinin's writings there is an article entitled *Straight Talk* addressed to the Russian emigrees abroad. It dealt with his report at the Twelfth Party Congress. A certain emigree newspaper had published a feuilleton in response to that report, questioning Kalinin's right to speak on the problem at all. In his reply Kalinin said:

"Permit me to assure the intellectual emigrees that my report was my own creation and I did not, until now, take any exceptional pride in its composition. I first became aware of the value of said report after reading Markov's article in the Whiteguard *Dni*, for politics has taught us that if the enemy berates you, you may conclude you've done well."

Indeed, Kalinin had "done well". The new farm tax policy of the state directed at stimulating the development of the economy of the countryside and improving the peasants' life helped the Party in its subsequent work with the peasant masses and drew the latter still closer to the Soviet government.

Kalinin spared neither time nor energy in the carrying out of his duties as Chairman of TSIK of the USSR and VTSIK. All the links of the intricate state apparatus were coordinated and set running smoothly. He arranged and chairmaned big meetings and sessions of these Executive Committees. At his suggestion the Agricultural Commission of VTSIK mounted the First All-Russia Agricultural and Handicraft Industries Exhibition. His idea that such an exhibition be organized was warmly approved by Lenin.

The exhibition opened in August 1923, demonstrating the political and economic advances the Soviet Union was making. Kalinin was not present at its opening as he was travelling at the time in the Far East, which had been liberated from the Whiteguards and interventionists only a short while before. Immediately on his return to the capital, he went to see it. Lenin also visited the exhibition.

The Death of Lenin

The last few months of 1923 for Kalinin were crammed with work in TSIK and VTSIK, speeches at conferences and meetings, trips to the Volga area and preparations for the Eleventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets which opened on January 18, 1924. Kalinin presided over the Congress, and a sad mission befell him there: the announcement of Lenin's death. Here is how the great poet of the revolution Vladimir Mayakovsky described those tragic minutes in his poem *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin:*

Raven-like,
the ceiling
swooped upon us,
lowering;
down dropped heads,
bent floorward by their fears.
Of a sudden
ghastly,
blackly glowering
grew the swimming lights
of chandeliers.
Silence choked the bell's unneeded tinkle.
Up Kalinin struggled,
nerves on edge.
Tears—
go try and chew them
from moustache and wrinkle:
they betray him,
shining
on the beard's sharp wedge.

Four days later Kalinin made a speech on Lenin's death at the opening of the Second Congress of Soviets of the USSR.

"It is hard to put into words, to find a suitable form in which to express the feelings which have gripped not only us who are here but also the broadest masses of workers and peasants, and not only of the Union of Soviet Republics, but the oppressed masses of the whole world," he said.

He concluded his speech as follows: "We shall sacredly observe his behests. As we pay him our last respects, let us say firmly to ourselves: his ideas and his behests on the struggle for communism are our ideas and our behests. Faced with the grave loss of our greatest and most beloved leader, we must all multiply our efforts in the struggle for the attainment of communism—the ultimate goal of the working class."

The question of the possibility of building socialism in the USSR was the burning question of that period. A group of old opponents of Lenin's course formed the so-called "new opposition" and engaged in factional struggle, denying the possibility of building socialism in the Land of Soviets. The Party dealt them a telling rebuff.

At the Thirteenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Kalinin delivered a report on work in the countryside. He was just back from a trip to Siberia where he acquainted himself closely with the life of the peasants. He observed the beginnings of the process of uniting the poorest peasants into communes; he was convinced of the desire of the tillers of the land to work it collectively. These were new and very significant processes. It was important to study them carefully and analyze them on the spot, as Mikhail Kalinin recommended to all government and Party workers. It was wrong to try to anticipate events and accelerate the process of collectivization, he pointed out.

The conclusion he drew from all he had seen was that at the given stage the task in the countryside was to do everything to raise agricultural production, establish a broad system of state credits for the peasants, and encourage the formation of the collective farms with understanding and tact. Those conclusions were endorsed by the Congress.

Soon Kalinin received another responsible assignment as head of the commission set up under the Central Executive Committee of the USSR to prepare the text of the Constitution of the USSR. That work took much of his time, but he did not give up his trips; he went to Leningrad, and he addressed a Party conference in Orenburg.

In 1925 he went to Central Asia, where national state frontiers had just been mapped resulting in the formation of the Uzbek and Turkmen union republics. The practical implementation of that historical event was entrusted to Kalinin. He helped the local leadership to hold organizing congresses of their national Communist Parties and congresses of Soviets. He addressed meetings in Bokhara, Ashkhabad and Tashkent, but he was not a man to remain long in the capitals and large cities. Accompanied by the leaders of those republics, he visited many *kishlaks* (villages) and observed the life and customs of the local *dekhans* (peasants), with whom he had many long talks.

From Central Asia his course lay towards the Transcaucasia—to Baku and Tiflis. Then he toured the North Caucasus. Everywhere he was received by the people enthusiastically, for they looked on him as the emissary of Lenin, and respected him as a champion of the interests of the working people, and loved him as one of themselves.

Industry and agriculture were developing and Lenin's plan for the electrification of the country, GOELRO, was rapidly coming to life.

Having set its compass towards the

construction of socialism, a plan for the industrialization of the country which would ensure its further development was drawn up and adopted by the Fourteenth Party Congress.

At the Fourteenth Party Congress Kalinin was elected a member of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee–a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee.

A staunch member of the Leninist Party, Kalinin was deeply aware that all the achievements of the country depended on the unity of the Party's ranks. Therefore he fought tirelessly against all and sundry oppositionists who were trying to turn the Party from its chosen path. At the request of the Central Committee, he travelled widely during this period, addressing meetings of Communists, often under very tense and difficult circumstances, and with his habitual passion and conviction exposing the splitting activities of the opposition.

His efforts as Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR were directed at carrying out the decisions of the Fourteenth Party Congress, which meant not only rehabilitating the old and building new factories and mills, but also bringing about a great rise in the cultural level of the people. The first step in that direction was to do away with illiteracy.

A voluntary society which named itself "Down With Illiteracy" was formed and Kalinin was made its head. It comprised millions of enthusiasts who had responded to the Party's call for help in eradicating that undesirable heritage of the past.

As the literacy campaign got under way, *likbez* (schools or groups for the liquidation of illiteracy) were formed. That Russian word is hardly ever used any more, but it has entered the lexicon of the revolution. Over ten thousand schools and centers for the liquidation of illiteracy sprang up all over the country; in factories and at building sites, in villages and remote farmsteads people began to study the alphabet and to write their first sentence: "We are not slaves, slaves are not we."

Kalinin attached particular importance to the eradication of illiteracy among the peasants. A genuine cultural revolution had started in the country which was destined to wrest millions of people from the blight of ignorance.

VIII. The Common Will of the People

In the course of his many years as head of the highest executive body of the Soviet government, Kalinin made an enormous contribution to the development of the Soviets and to their perfection as the form of popular government born of the revolution.

His activity in that respect was highly important.

The elections of delegates to the Fourth All-Union Congress of Soviets and to Soviets at all levels were drawing near. Kalinin spoke and wrote a great deal at this time about the necessity of perfecting the bodies of popular government.

Here is a revealing excerpt from one of his articles for the newspaper *Izvestia*:

"Our main and constant task in the elections to the Soviets is to organize the worker and peasant masses and turn the Soviets into increasingly effective instruments of the masses. We must instill it in the minds of the workers and peasants that the Soviets are bodies where they can apply their energy and initiative. . ."

He particularly tried to get that idea clearly across to the peasants. To that end he wrote his *Letter to the Peasants on the Elections to the Soviets,* which came out in book form early in 1927.

"One peasant by himself is not strong," he wrote. "Only when he joins others in the Soviets does he cease to be one peasant and become a representative of the masses. His voice in the Soviets is no longer the voice of just Ivan or Peter; it is the voice of the peasants who have elected him to the Soviet." The purpose of that article and of Kalinin's many speeches was to draw the rural toilers into the work of the Soviets and inspire them to greater political activity.

The election to the Soviets proved that the Party enjoyed the support and trust of the overwhelming majority of the people.

Reporting to the Fourth All-Union Congress of Soviets in 1927 on the main tasks of agriculture and the industrialization of the country, Kalinin cited innumerable facts testifying to the vigorous movement of the USSR towards socialism, facts showing that Lenin's behests were being successfully carried out.

Birth of the Collective Farms

The forward-looking agrarian policy of the Party made it possible to solve many problems relating to the development of agriculture. But the existence of a considerable section of hostile rich peasants (kulaks) who exploited hired laborers was not in keeping with the general trend of the country's development and left the country's demand for food products unsatisfied. Life itself was raising the question of the collectivization of agriculture. That question was placed before the delegates to the Fifteenth Party Congress held in December 1927.

That Congress was memorable for a number of reasons. After analyzing the road already travelled by the country, it

adopted directives on the compilation of the first five-year plan and charted a course towards the collectivization of agriculture. That was the beginning of the widespread collective farm movement and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class.

A large-scale and complicated process, or more correctly, a revolutionary change started in the countryside. It was beset by great difficulties. The kulaks stubbornly resisted it and refused to sell their grain to the Soviet state. They went so far in their attempts to prevent collectivization as to kill its active promoters, burn down collective farm buildings, poison livestock and wreck equipment.

Kalinin made it his duty to participate directly in the implementation of the policy of collectivization. He addressed himself personally to the peasants and rural Communists and explained the forms and methods the struggle for collectivization should take.

"In every village one must let life itself indicate what are the appropriate measures. To discover those measures and display creative initiative in that respect is the task of the Communist... The first thing is to gain control of the sphere in which the kulak is active. That does not mean that you are to seize his creamery; what it means is that the kulak must be squeezed out of business by the cooperative."

At the same time Kalinin warned against high-handed administrative methods of collectivizing the peasants, against unnecessary haste and a desire to get the campaign over with as fast as possible, for that would only discredit the idea of collectivization. He criticized the mistaken notion that the Soviets could be abolished in the districts that were completely collectivized and their functions transferred to the collective farms. The Soviets were not only administrative bodies, they were the foundation of all work with the poorest peasants. The role of the local Soviets in the process of collectivization and socialist construction generally was bound to grow.

In the Village of His Birth

Mikhail Kalinin went to Verkhnyaya Troitsa to attend the opening of the clubhouse which can still be seen there today. It was called a "People's House" in those days. Of course, it was not merely the opening ceremony which brought him home. He had long been planning to visit his relatives, help around the farm and talk things over with the neighbors.

They had many questions to ask him, mostly about collectivization. Although there was already a collective farm in Verkhnyaya Troitsa, its ways were still strange and unfamiliar. A peasant likes to get to the bottom of things and understand what's what. Kalinin realized it and did not evade their questions. He spoke for six hours at a meeting of the collective farm board. How the peasants drank in his every word! Now he smiled as he recalled that they had even proposed to collectivize the chicks in each household, and now he frowned as he spoke of the harm of trying to draw the peasants into the collective farms by force.

His homecomings were beneficial for both his fellow villagers and himself. Collectivization was going well on the whole, but there were errors and there were excesses. The Party did not wish to gloss them over or condone them. Mistakes were being corrected and it was important that the peasants should know it. In the spring of 1931, Kalinin published his article *For or Against the Collective Farms* in which he addressed himself to those who still had doubts about collectivization and failed to see its advantages. The gist of the article was that the

collective farm movement was not invented by "men at the top", but was a necessity. It was the only way to transform the countryside and enable it to advance towards socialism.

The strength of the article lay not only in its cogent arguments and clear style, but in the fact that its author was himself a former peasant, one who had not severed his close ties with the village, where his mother continued to live. When a collective farm was set up in Verkhnyaya Troitsa, he was made a member, and during his summer visits he worked alongside the other peasants.

His personal example was persuasive. The peasants trusted him. He really loved the village. He preferred to spend his summer holiday not at the seashore, but by the side of the picturesque Medvedi-tsa River. When he came to Verkhnyaya Troitsa, he helped his mother with the chores, and joined in the haymaking, and went berry and mushroom picking.

Recollections of the Villagers

Yelena Smirnova, a member of the Verkhnyaya Troitsa collective farm, recalled:

"I knew Kalinin well. Even in the hard years before the revolution, when Kalinin was a lad, we were struck by his sincerity and warm feeling for other people. After a collective farm was organized in Verkhnyaya Troitsa, Mikhail Ivanovich came home often. Knowing how kind and helpful he always was, people from even distant villages came to him for advice, or to talk about their collective farm, or just to share their troubles and joys. He listened to them all attentively and found the right words of comfort and counsel for each."

And here are the recollections of another collective farm woman, Yevdokia Bakhareva, who lives in the village of Ilinskoye:

"I particularly remember Mikhail Ivanovich's visit in 1929. We did not have a collective farm yet and the rich peasants of our village were very much against our starting one. Mikhail Ivanovich came and called us to a meeting near the clubhouse. He spoke for three hours. He explained how a collective farm should be organized, what its advantages were over individual farming, and how the poor peasants should be accepted in the collective farm.

"The local kulaks got up to speak against Mikhail Ivanovich, while the plain folks defended him. The majority were on his side. Feeling that many of the peasants were with him, he gave it to the kulaks and their flunkies good and strong.

" 'Whatever the difficulties, we must strive to improve the life of all the working peasants,' he said.

"His speech gave the people heart and soon nineteen households joined the collective farm; by 1930 all the rest came in with us."

Until 1935, Kalinin went to Troitsa late every summer. He often spent his vacation in the nearby village of Tetkovo, where the fine manorial estate had been turned into a rest home. But he did not forget his village and often stepped into the office of the collective farm and interested himself in its affairs, praising where praise was due, pointing out its lapses and advising on ways of correcting them. His visits to his native village are still remembered.

He was demanding and strict with his fellow villagers and did not show them any special favor.

The first collective farm chairman in Verkhnyaya Troitsa, Vasili Tarassov, recalled:

"When I turned to him for help, Mikhail Ivanovich usually told me I had to settle the question myself. 'Talk it over with the people and go ahead. Only make

sure they know what you are up to. We need people who are capable of weighing the pros and cons of every situation and making correct decisions.'

"Mikhail Ivanovich always upheld my prestige as the chairman of the farm. But if I was wrong he'd say so:

" 'Vasili, you're wrong there.' "

Kalinin was a good husband and father. He had a big, friendly family: two sons—Valerian and Alexander, and three daughters—Julia, Lydia and Anna. He kept a paternal eye on them, busy as he was, interesting himself in their daily activities, checking their homework, discussing their school affairs with them.

Both he and his wife were strict with the children and tried not to spoil them. In the summer they were usually taken to the country, where they played with the village children of their own age.

"My relations with my children are very simple and comradely," Kalinin said. "My children like to argue with me and are very pleased when they can catch me up on some point. Nothing seems to give them so much pleasure as to get the best of me in an argument. Of course, I also try, for my part, to put one over on them. Arguing with their father seems to be their hobby. But I have always felt that they looked up to me, and not because they were dependent materially on me."

The children grew up. There were grandchildren. Now Kalinin's great-grandchildren, the fourth generation, are coming of age. The sound traditions laid down by the founder of the family are still honored in it.

The Last Visit

After his mother's death, Kalinin and his family spent their summer holidays at the rest home in Tetkovo. He liked it there because it was near the Medveditsa, the woods, and above all—his native village.

He would rise with the break of day. Not because he was a poor sleeper, or even because he retained from his peasant days the habit of waking with the sun. No, it was rather that he did not want to miss the most beautiful part of a summer morning—the dawn. At that time of the day it was so quiet one could almost hear the thrushes cleaning their feathers. His family was accustomed to his ways, and got his breakfast ready for him the evening before, his favorite dish of milk and black bread. First he would go outside to see what the weather was like. Then he would plan the day.

On this particular morning, having finished his milk, he turned his steps, the unhurried steps of one no longer young, towards the woods. He followed a forest trail he had followed ever so many times before. The pine trees and wild strawberries filled the air with their fragrance. The birds sang, and Kalinin picked them out by their tone. That was a goldfinch, and that a thrush, and that was a chiff-chaff. He walked on lost in thought, stopping only when the crackling of a branch or flapping of a wing reached his ears, or when he came upon a particularly lovely spot.

From somewhere to the right there reached him a soft, familiar sound: swish, swish. He listened. The sound persisted. Pushing the branches aside with his arms, he moved towards it. In a moment he found himself in a large clearing. How well he remembered it! As a boy he had often come here with his mother to make hay. The grass was always high and lush here. That there

were women mowing it now did not surprise him in the least. On the contrary, it was as if he had purposely made for this spot, as distant as his own youth, in order to cut the grass alongside them. And, as sometimes happens when a man returns to a place he knew well many years ago, he succumbed to a feeling that among these women he would see his mother. Several voices recalled him to the present.

"Welcome home, Mikhailo Ivanych!"

"Fine weather we're having!"

"Good-morning to you all, my fine lassies," laughed Kalinin as he stepped out of the shadow of the trees. "Aren't you rather late with the haymaking? As I remember, the hay used to be in before now."

The women drew around him, smiling and adjusting their kerchiefs on their heads. Kalinin knew them well. They were Anna Kruglova, Aksinya Alexeyeva and Anastasia Moronova.

"Late, did you say?" It was Anastasia speaking. "Well, we're behind with all the work, Mikhailo Ivanych. Now that you've come, maybe you'll help out, eh?"

"You used to be great with the scythe," put in Anna.

"And I will have a try at that. Just to make sure I haven't forgotten how." Kalinin took off his jacket. "Is there an extra scythe handy?"

"You may have mine," offered Anastasia.

He took it from her and gave it a try.

"Who whet this scythe? He deserves a whetting himself." He looked at Anastasia again. "You don't seem very spry, Anastasia. Is something wrong?"

"No, I'm just tired. There's too much to do and nobody to do it."

"What about the men? I see you women are the only ones out today making hay."

"Each to his own. Some of us work, and some hang around the office. Why don't you stop by and have a look? Count up all the bookkeepers and watchmen and storekeepers. . ."

Swish, swish! Swish, swish! The grass fell in little mounds at his feet. How Kalinin liked the work! But he did not feel the old pleasure now. Anastasia's words upset him. She would not speak so without reason. Evidently not everyone in the collective farm was doing his job as he ought to. He would go to the office that very evening and have things out with the chairman and other men. Having decided so, he felt slightly better and let the haymaking absorb him. His troubled thoughts receded before the wonderful sense of strength and gratification in the peasant's work which he had never lost. The mounds of grass piled up under his feet—one, two! one, two! Suddenly a bird flew up at him from under the scythe, giving him quite a start. He bent down and began to feel around in the grass. Of course! Here was the nest containing funny little yellow-beaked fledglings.

"Come here," he shouted gaily to the women as he cut the grass away in a circle around the nest. "I've found a nest! See that you don't dislodge it by accident. Let it be."

And again the scythe sang: swish, swish! But before he knew it he was tired. His back was wet. He was out of practice; it was a long time since he had held a scythe in his hands. Or maybe it was age telling on him, for he was going to be sixty soon. A bit late to start haymaking again. Kalinin took out his watch and looked at the time. No wonder he was tired! He had been working alongside the women for all of two hours!

They called a break, and the women opened their baskets and bundles and began to press tempting peasant dishes on their guest: potato pancakes, home-made cheese, kvass. Kalinin sat down on the grass. How tasty everything was. He wiped his moustache.

"I do believe I've earned some kvass," he said, taking another swallow of the re-

freshing drink. "The best kvass in the world!"

"And it's a nice day we're having for a change," said Anastasia softly. "We're sick of the rain. Why, it only cleared up yesterday."

"You must have brought the good weather with you, Mikhailo Ivanych."

"Indeed I did!" laughed Kalinin. "I sent it down by special express. I said: how can they ever manage in my village without some sunshine?" After a short pause, he asked in a serious tone of voice: "Is the clover in?"

"That it is not!" cried all three women. "Nobody's even thinking about it yet. We're behind with all the work."

"What about the flax? I'm told it was planted on poor land this year."

"It's on the central field, by the little road."

"That field is not the best." Kalinin was frowning again. "Or isn't it bad?"

"The flax doesn't seem bad," Moronova answered for them all. "Our worry now is that we're not putting by enough hay."

"Very well then, I shall call on your chairman today."

"Oh do, do, Mikhailo Ivanych! Have a good talk with him. He's been so taken up with his big building projects, he's forgotten our immediate tasks."

Kalinin stood up, got his jacket and shook it out, and glanced at the sky.

"Looks like the rest of the day will be clear. I'll be off then. They must be wondering at home where I am. Goodbye and good health to you all!"

"Good-bye, Mikhailo Ivanych! Thanks for the help!"

Kalinin retraced his steps. He reached his quarters much later than usual.

"At last," cried his wife with relief as she stepped out on the porch to greet him. "I was about to go out searching for you. What makes you look so glum?"

"I've talked with some of the neighbors. Not everything is going as well as it should in the collective farm."

"You must be hungry. Have some lunch."

"Where are the children?"

"They've all run off—down by the river, most likely."

He was beginning to feel the effects of the morning's work. Lying down to rest, he soon fell fast asleep. When he opened his eyes, the sun was on the other side of the house.

"Oho! That was some nap! I've slept the good day away," said Kalinin, joining his wife in the kitchen, where she was preparing the evening meal.

"And why should you not rest, indeed? You've only just arrived."

"I've got to go to Troitsa."

But it was evening before he reached Troitsa, because before he got very far he met the school teacher Andrei Strakhov, and was persuaded by him to take a look at the new schoolhouse in Posady, a neighboring village. In fact, the teacher had come to Tetkovo to fetch him.

The school proved to be a fine building. Kalinin went from classroom to classroom, admiring the carpenters' work; they'd done an excellent job.

"How different from the school we once went to!" he exclaimed. "You must tell the children that. They ought to know how much the Soviet government is doing for them. In this fine school they should study hard and grow up to be good young men and women."

Kalinin stepped outside and sat down on a pile of wood near the school.

The carpenters came over to him and then some peasants joined them. News of the arrival of the Chairman of TSIK had evidently spread around Posady.

"Now you have a school where your children can study from the 1st to the 10th grade," Kalinin said with satisfaction.

"We couldn't want any better school,"

said the local people. "That's thanks to you, Mikhailo Ivanych."

"Why me? Thank the carpenters here, they're the ones who built it." Turning to Strakhov, he continued, "As I remember, you first chose a site near the Tetkovo road. This site is much better; it's beautiful and it's right in a pine forest. The villagers of Posady are entitled to such a school. Fourteen of them volunteered to fight on the fronts of the Civil War. A good school for their children to study in is the best monument we could put up to them". Kalinin looked at his watch and got up. "I must be off. I promised to stop in to see the folks at Troitsa."

The teacher and peasants saw their guest off, accompanying him till he was on the road to Troitsa. Again he was on a familiar path which took him past the Tetkovo field and the old patch of woods planted by the landlords of old, but his thoughts were on the collective farm. He wished it were doing better; not everything seemed to be going well there. The clover was not in, five mounds of hay had been allowed to spoil. And then they'd be coming to Moscow and asking him for fodder: "Help us, Mikhailo Ivanych, we're out of feed." No, better to help them now by giving them a good piece of his mind. That was always useful.

Near Troitsa he met Darya Salnikova and they walked on together.

"How are you getting on, Darya?"

"Poorly, Mikhailo Ivanych, very poorly. My health's bad, and I'm getting weaker all the time. Oh, it's not easy living alone! On top of it all, my hut's about to fall apart."

Kalinin's face grew longer and longer as she told her sad story. They parted near her hut.

"Yes, Darya, you live poorly."

He found the collective farm office crowded and thick with smoke. Several men were sitting on a bench; Kalinin recognized them: Gavril Zhdanov, Bychkov, Dolikov, and Belov. The chairman was at his desk, rustling through some papers and counting. Everyone rose when Kalinin came in, and there were noisy greetings. But Kalinin was grave, and did not joke as usual or sit down next to the men on the bench. Standing near the door, he asked:

"Well, chairman, have you counted up what the unharvested clover is going to cost the collective farm?" Before the other could speak, he went on: "What do I find, my good neighbors? While you sit here smoking up the office, the collective farm's riches are going to waste in the fields. Is that right?"

Nobody answered. Now Kalinin sat down near the desk and began to speak again, from time to time stroking his graying beard.

"Aren't you ashamed? This morning I took a walk to the Tetkovo woods, and what did I see? Only the women were out cutting the grass. Anastasia Moronova is worn out with all the work. I could barely recognize her. And on the way here I met Darya Salnikova; she's sick and her hut needs repairing. But you big strong men, what's that to you? Perish, collective farm woman Darya, by the mercy of your neighbors. Why don't you help her, send her away for treatment? The farm won't be ruined by kind acts like that."

The chairman was nervously scratching his unshaven cheek. Of course, Kalinin was right. But the days were too short! The harvesting was due, and the fodder had to be got ready, and it had been raining for days without end. He said all that to himself and not to Kalinin, for it would not have helped matters any. Kalinin kept at them:

"The women are working themselves to the bone on the fields while you big hulks sit around chewing the rag."

"We did our share of the work today," somebody said in self-justification.

"Nobody's talking about you. It's something else. What are the bookkeepers and storekeepers and watchmen sitting here for day after day when there's so much work to be done in the fields? First, get the harvest in and the fields cleared, and then you can sit down to your counting all you like. Since the weather's been so unfavorable this year, everybody has to pitch in, young and old. You hear me, Pyotr? Get the most out of every clear day. One summer's day feeds the winter! How many times have you said that? Or have you forgotten the wisdom of our fathers?"

"You're right," said the chairman softly. "We've let the rains and the construction work hold everything up. Stick out your nose too far, and you're caught by the tail."

"Well, you needn't hang your nose too low," said Kalinin, smiling reassuringly.

Everybody smiled politely in return. The chairman opened his mouth to speak, but Kalinin put in first:

"This is what you do, Pyotr. Tomorrow have everyone in the farm, all of Troitsa, out cutting the clover. That is the most urgent task now."

"That's what we intended," replied the chairman. "We were waiting for good weather."

So far, so good. He'd given them a piece of his mind; now he felt better. They'd understand. He reached for his green tobacco pouch and rolled himself a cigarette. The farmers breathed easily again. That meant Kalinin was no longer angry. And, sure enough, having taken a puff, he smiled good-naturedly at them.

"Haven't frightened you, have I? I suppose you said to yourselves: what's he come here for—to scold? Never mind. It's good for you, shake you out of the rut you're getting yourselves and the farm into. I can see that better than you, with a fresh eye, so to say. Yes, there's another thing," Kalinin stood up. "Where have you planted the flax? Suppose we go out and have a look at it, eh?"

The others followed. The flax plots were not very far and when they reached them, Kalinin's mood visibly soared, for the flax was really fine, tall and thick. He stood there several minutes looking at it and then he said without rancour:

"Those gossips deserve a spanking! The way they talked I really thought you'd chosen a bad spot. But this is excellent flax. Congratulations."

And he turned back.

"A fine school they've got now at Posady. I looked it over today. That was a praiseworthy undertaking, good neighbors. The children are getting a wonderful gift for their new school year."

"Don't you fret, Mikhailo Ivanych," Alexei Klyukvin put in softly. "Everything will be done as you say. The clover will be taken in. You know yourself what kind of a summer this has been. Fighting the weather—that's the peasants' curse."

"What is all this talk about the weather?" Kalinin asked with a wry smile. "This is my second day here and I haven't seen a drop of rain. Well, tomorrow will show. I'll be there, even if it rains. If we come out together, the rain won't be in the way."

The men laughed. Kalinin was jesting again. He was no longer angry, and that was good.

The next morning Darya Salnikova was awakened by a knocking at the door.

"Open the door, ma'am, and let in your guests!" shouted somebody under her window. She recognized the voice of one of the carpenters.

"Good-morning, Fedotych. What brings you here so early in the morning?"

"Kalinin sent us. Said you needed some repairs. We've brought the material with us."

And the hammers banged away in Verkhnyaya Troitsa. Kalinin stopped by in the evening and asked the carpenters:

"How's it going?"

"As it should, Mikhailo Ivanych!"

"Fine, fine."

His voice brought Darya Salnikova out of the house.

"Thank you, Mikhailo. You've done me a great favor. You can't imagine what a difference this will make! Won't you step in for a cup of tea?"

"I'll come when the repairs are finished."

He continued towards the river in his Russian high boots and simple jacket, carrying his stick as usual.

He had spent all that day with the peasants taking in the clover, and now he wanted to be alone and sit down by the side of the Medveditsa, which he remembered as being particularly calm and beautiful at the end of day. He stopped beside two pines which like twins grew from one root. The view from there was entrancing. Below was the river with its little island, and in the distance–the woods, pointed and silent. Soon the sun would come down and be reflected in pink and yellow spots on the water, and the fish would begin to stir.

Kalinin sat down on the bank and gave himself up to his thoughts.

That was in 1935. It was his last visit to Verkhnyaya Troitsa.

IX. The House on Vozdvizhenka

In everything he did, and no matter how weighed down by cares and duties, Kalinin never ceased to think of the main goal: strengthening the ties of the Communist Party with the people. He was always at the side of the masses fighting for and building the new life; he never lost sight of their interests.

"VTSIK on Wheels" had travelled tens of thousands of kilometers. There was probably not a single part of the vast country Kalinin had not visited. He continued his trips during the 'thirties, in the period of the first five-year plans and all-out socialist construction. He was always on the road, always in the midst of things. A huge construction program was under way; heroic work was the order of the day. Kalinin had to see it with his own eyes. That was his maxim.

Early in 1934 he participated in the 17th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), where he was reelected a member of the Central Committee. At a Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee, he was elected to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee.

In February 1935, the best workers of the country's collective farms gathered in Moscow for their Second All-Union Congress. There they adopted the new Rules of the Collective Farm which incorporated the experience of socialist construction in the countryside and helped to further strengthen the collective farms. Kalinin participated in that Congress as well as the committee which worked out the draft of the new Rules.

Shortly after that he undertook several trips, to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan.

The Seventh All-Union Congress of Soviets (1935), after analyzing the nature of the basic changes that had taken place in the economy and class structure of the Land of Soviets, declared that Lenin's great behest that NEP Russia be transformed into socialist Russia had been in the main fulfilled. Therefore the Congress considered the question of introducing changes in the Constitution of the USSR.

Closing the Congress, Kalinin said: "The Central Committee's suggestion, accepted by this Congress, that certain changes be made in the Constitution, that it be brought into accord with the present correlation of the class forces of our country and that the electoral system be further democratized, is of exceptional importance. The political meaning of that reform is clear. It is the result... of the increased strength of the working population of the Soviet Union, of the increased confidence of the peoples of the USSR that the further development of Soviet democracy will ensure even greater successes of socialism..."

Mikhail Kalinin was a member of the Constitutional Commission which drafted the text of the new Constitution of the USSR; at the Eighth Extraordinary Congress of Soviets of the USSR he was made a member of the edito-

rial board which adopted the final text of the Constitution. That text was ratified by the Congress on December 5, 1936. Since then December 5 has been celebrated in the Soviet Union as a great national holiday, Constitution Day.

In January 1938, at the first session of the First Supreme Soviet of the USSR, elected in accordance with the new Constitution, Mikhail Kalinin was named to the post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

And still Kalinin did not give up his propaganda and publicistic activity. His speeches and articles covered a wide range of subjects. He addressed himself to Party activists and young peasant authors, to the graduates of the All-Union Industrial Academy, the students of Moscow.

Many of his articles in this period were devoted to the problems of the education of the young people of the Soviet Union, to the Komsomol (Young Communist League).

In Kalinin's Reception Room

To meet and talk with people was not merely one of Kalinin's numerous duties as the head of state; it was a deep inner need. His great popularity is attributable to his sensitive approach to every working man or woman and his ability to speak to the latter in plain, ordinary language. He also brought to these contacts an inborn simplicity and warmth, a great breadth of mind and knowledge of books and of men.

All these qualities explain why people travelled hundreds and thousands of kilometers to the famous house on Vozdvizhenka Street, whose doors were always open to all, in order to see and speak to him.

The conversation would flow easily, sped on by his simple questions to the visitor—a peasant, for instance.

"When did you plough over the clover field?"

"You have to buy rope too?"

"How much does the chairman of your collective farm earn?"

"How is the building work coming along?"

Listening carefully to the replies, he would jot down a reminder here and there. And then came his turn to answer the questions of the visitor.

Here is a typical scene. A group of collective farm flax-growers has come to see him. He greets them warmly.

"Come in comrades, have a seat."

When one of the visitors starts to make what promises to be a speech, Kalinin stops him with a smile.

"Only no speeches of greeting, please. Just say what you have on your minds. Let's have a perfectly free exchange of opinion."

Their long, fruitful conversation draws to an end, and the visitors are seen off with words of counsel:

"Well, here's wishing you success. You ought to keep first place. There's a great demand for flax. We need towels and sheets and all kinds of linen. So keep up the good work."

Practical steps were taken as a result of many of these conversations. Not a single letter to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee and, later, to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was left unanswered.

These meetings with people helped Kalinin to solve questions of state importance, to educate people, to improve the work of Soviet government bodies both in the capital and in the localities. For his doors were open not only to workers and peasants; many heads of government agencies and industrial organizations desired to speak with him.

Some of them came in the naive belief that Kalinin would immediately solve all their problems and issue the necessary orders. But he always tried to get to the bottom of a situation first and made sure that he understood exactly what had brought the visitor to him. Then he would ask:

"What have you yourself done to set things right?"

If the reply did not satisfy him, he would explain patiently what should have been done. He was strict and unrelenting towards those who relied on the "center" to do everything for them and who displayed no initiative themselves.

In a word, many a Soviet administrator were given a very concrete lesson in Kalinin's reception room in how to manage affairs.

Kalinin could not tolerate bureaucracy and red-tape, faults which had not been entirely eradicated in the work of certain organizations. As early as 1924 he said:

"What does the fight against bureaucracy mean? To fight bureaucracy means to do away with the mechanical and formal performance of their varied duties by government workers... It seems to me that one of the methods that could seriously paralyze bureaucratization would be for the trade unions of Soviet government workers to make it very plain that *the government apparatus exists for the people.* Every government worker should bear in mind that he is at all times a servant of the people, and that even in reply to the most unreasonable demands and claims, if they cannot be satisfied, the refusal must be couched in terms that do not under any circumstances leave an unpleasant or bitter aftertaste."

Kalinin adhered undeviatingly to that principle himself. Here is an example of how he applied it in his daily practice.

One day he received a number of peasants from the Krasnoye Znamya Collective Farm in Moscow Region, who came to ask that they be given some additional land from the holdings of their neighbor, the Zolotoi Kolos Collective Farm.

Kalinin received them cordially, heard them out, and said:

"I cannot satisfy your request. The land you are asking for has been in the possession of the Zolotoi Kolos Collective Farm for several years and was given to them in perpetuity.

"Of course, both farms, theirs and yours, are small and weak. It would be in your common interest to unite, but that would have to be done on a completely voluntary basis.

"My advise to you is to think it over and talk to your neighbors about it."

From the number and content of the complaints addressed to him Kalinin could judge fairly well what was wrong with the work of one or another institution, and where and how the law was being violated. Speaking at the Sixteenth Party Conference in 1929, he said:

"I can safely say that when we assign a certain person to a certain job, that man's policy is sure to be reflected in my reception room. A careful, practical-minded worker who approaches every problem thoughtfully immediately lowers the number of visitors to my office. This is a fact. I must say that a year or year-and-a-half ago I had an incredible number of callers from the North Caucasus, who wanted to discuss not only the agricultural tax, but also ideological and many other questions.

"At the present time the number of callers from the North Caucasus is much smaller. Comrades, I can tell you what the mistakes of this or that person are. Come to my office on Vozdvizhenka and you can judge for yourself from the records."

The letters, callers, delegations to Kalinin's offices on Vozdvizhenka were a

kind of barometer of the mood of the people and the condition of the national economy. He closely followed the readings on that sensitive barometer, which with every new year and every new victory of the Soviet system pointed more and more surely to "clear". At the same time Kalinin instructed his staff and other local government workers to give the closest attention to every complaint, even if it seemed inconsequential. For behind it stood a real person, a citizen who believed in the justice of Soviet government. Kalinin did not allow anyone to undermine that belief by a careless, indifferent, formal approach to his job. Of course, he himself was a model of how to conduct such important state work.

Once, for instance, a collective farm woman, M. Semyonova, wrote to him asking that she be released from the payment of three thousand rubles for having sold her cow before joining the collective farm. After getting all the details of the case, Kalinin wrote this letter to the chairman of her collective farm:

"From the standpoint of the Law and the Collective Farm Rules, the decision is correct. Nevertheless it seems to me that her request should be complied with. She lives alone and is old, and judging from all the facts is not in a position to pay back three thousand rubles even if given six years to do it in. To apply such punishment to an aged collective farm woman, as the court has decreed, would be politically wrong.

"Actually nothing but a lot of juridical red-tape will come of the whole thing.

"Therefore I advise you to discuss the question at a meeting of the collective farmers and tell them that I personally consider it possible, as an exception, to release her from the payment of that sum for the cow. Please let me know what you decide, M. Kalinin."

The above letter is characteristic of Kalinin's whole style of work. The tone is respectful; there is nothing categorical about it. The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR advises the chairman of the collective farm what to do under the circumstances. He is not indifferent to the fate of an old collective farm woman, and suggests that the question be discussed by the collective, in whose justice Kalinin was a firm believer.

There were hundreds of such letters. Over the entire period that Kalinin's office existed, about eight million people applied there for help and advice, and all without exception received full answers to their requests. The Chairman and his assistants saw every eighth applicant in person. Thus one million people were personally received there. What can one say in greater praise of that modest office on Vozdvizhenka where the President of the Land of Soviets gave so much of himself to his people?

An Ambassador's Admission

Speaking to Lenin on the eve of his election as the Chairman of VTSIK, Kalinin remarked with some embarrassment that he would have to receive foreign ambassadors and was not very highly versed in diplomatic protocols. Soon such a reception took place and Kalinin's fears proved unfounded.

In the spring of 1922 the Soviet-German peace treaty, or Treaty of Rapallo, was concluded in Italy in the town of Rapallo. The experienced diplomat Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau was appointed the German ambassador to the USSR. Kalinin received him in the Kremlin. He wore his usual work suit.

Here is how the well-known Soviet

journalist Mikhail Koltsov described the reception and conduct of the ambassador.

"His high collar, hard as marble, was absolutely wet. He made the chairman of TSIK an old-fashioned Prussian bow of the kind which is now considered superfluous even in bourgeois ceremonies. He then uttered the official greetings with an exaggerated respectfulness, stressing the solemn meaning of every word.

"After the reception the ambassador was asked why he was so visibly ill at ease.

" 'You did not grow pale before kings in their royal robes.'

"To which the Count replied: 'Yes, I have stood before kings; worse, I have stood before the victorious Clemenceau. But Kalinin in his jacket, the workers and peasants who are represented by Kalinin, and who are governing their country so daringly and independently—that is the greatest power I have yet in all my life had to stand before."

As the head of state, Kalinin had to give much of his time to international affairs and diplomatic activity. In 1929 the German bourgeois newspaper *Kölnische Zeitung* had to admit: "It is surprising how naturally and simply Kalinin performs his duties as the representative of his country before foreign diplomats. All foreign ambassadors and envoys present their credentials to Kalinin. All of them appear before him in their dress suits, top-hat in hand. Kalinin continues to wear his simple and modest suit. The simplicity of his manners and conversation have made Kalinin one of the best propagandists of the Soviet system."

Kalinin also devoted much of his attention to foreign-policy matters. He urged that relations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America be normalized. In 1933 he sent a message to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt saying: "There can be no doubt that difficulties, when such exist or arise between two nations, can only be resolved when they maintain direct relations with each other, and, on the other hand, have no chance of being resolved in the absence of such relations."

That message has not lost its meaning for today. It shows that Kalinin was a consistent proponent and promoter of Lenin's foreign policy course of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems. He devoted much energy to the struggle for peace and international security.

X. The Grim Years of the War

Kalinin's state and Party activity was extremely varied. It would be hard to find a sphere of the nation's creative life with which he was not closely connected. He addressed the students of the military academies and conferences of the outstanding teachers of the urban and rural schools. He had meetings with actors, artists, doctors, scientists. He conferred the orders and decorations of the country and received ambassadors and foreign statesmen. He wrote articles on various questions, primarily on the communist education of the working people, and they were published in separate editions and in his collected works.

His inspiring words, wise and simple, reached the hearts and minds of all, firing their desire for creative activity and their pride in their country and people.

Belief in Victory

In those ominous years leading up to the war, the Soviet government made a tremendous effort to meet the oncoming threat fully armed. To that end the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR under Kalinin's chairmanship passed a number of decrees and laws aimed at strengthening the country's defense capability.

On June 22, 1941, fascist Germany attacked the Soviet Union treacherously, without declaring war.

In his appeal to the people to rise to the defense of their native land and its freedom, Mikhail Kalinin said:

"We have no other recourse but to fight. The question is this: either we shall polish the fascists' boots and become their slaves, that is, accept our destruction, or we shall fight for our freedom and independence."

All during the Great Patriotic War Kalinin gave himself unstintingly to the cause of victory over the enemy. He was almost seventy years old then, but again, as during the Civil War, he visited troops on various fronts, and he travelled to the districts just liberated from the fascists. His inspired words were heard all over the country.

Yevgraf Kulkov, of the village of Gorodnya, recalled:

"It was a clear, cold day in January 1942. I remember that I was getting ready to go somewhere when my neighbor burst into the house. 'Get ready to receive a visitor,' he said. 'Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin is passing by and plans to stop in our village, they tell me. Where shall we meet him, what do you say?'

" 'Your house is a good place,' I told him. 'It's roomy and clean.'

"Just then several cars drew up, and Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin stepped out of one. He was wearing a coat with a fur collar and a black caracul hat, and holding a stick in his hand. They came inside. We looked at each other bleakly. There was nothing to offer our guest. The collective farm had been plundered by the fascists, and exactly one cow re-

mained in all of the village of Gorodnya. We offered Mikhail Ivanovich some milk.

" 'It will refresh you after your ride. It's all we have.'

"Mikhail Ivanovich refused to have any.

"When he offered the men some tobacco, even the nonsmokers took a puff; it was an honor to smoke a cigarette with Kalinin.

"He spoke to us a long time about the heroism of our people, and asked us how we were getting on.

" 'You'll have to build up the collective farm again,' he said. 'That's your big job now. Get the farm going and help the army. And you'll have to rely on your own resources.' "

Every month the newspaper *Izvestia* carried articles by Kalinin on various questions of the defense of the country. Millions of people listened to his speeches over the radio.

He travelled to the front in order to present the commanders and soldiers with government decorations personally. The arrival of the little gray-haired man, every bit a civilian, in old-fashioned round eyeglasses, inspired the men. They saw him as one who had travelled with the Soviet Union the whole heroic path of struggle and victory.

In the liberated districts, he helped to start up the collective farms again and restore the ruined economy. Not even ill health kept him away from his work. He had to be everywhere himself. His close friends were amazed by his boundless energy.

By the spring of 1944, Mikhail Kalinin had been the head of the Soviet state for twenty-five consecutive years. He was awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor to mark the anniversary.

The long-awaited victory came in May 1945, and Europe cast off the chains of German fascism. That vicious enemy of all the peoples of the world was defeated. "We have scored a great victory", wrote Kalinin, "and so demonstrated in practice the economic, political, military, cultural and moral strength of our socialist homeland."

Kalinin's health began to fail. At his personal request, the March 1946 session of the USSR Supreme Soviet released him from his duties as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. He remained a member of the Presidium and continued to work.

He died on June 3, 1946 in his 71st year.

* * *

All his long and memorable life was dedicated to his people. He traversed a straight and inspiring road together with the Party, together with his country. "The Communist Party gave birth to me," he said. That was true. The Bolshevik Party trained him to be a fighter, organizer and leader.

"Kalinin," said A. Mikoyan, "was a model of the dedicated revolutionary of whom he himself had said: 'To implant the ideas of communism requires passion. To lead the masses one must burn with the same fire as the masses.' And that fire burned in him all his life."

He lived for the interests and hopes of the people, and his memory will live forever in their deeds, exploits, achievements. His name has been given to many towns and villages in the Soviet Union. Streets, squares, avenues, factories, collective farms, schools and colleges have been named after him. His writings have been published in millions of copies in tens of languages of the Soviet peoples and other countries of the world. Each year thousands of visitors come to the Kalinin Museum in Moscow and his Museum-House in Verkhnyaya Troitsa to honor his memory.

To the Soviet people he will always be the highest model of the citizen, fighter, man born of the Revolution.

А. Дементьев, А. Пьянов
МИХАИЛ КАЛИНИН
на английском языке
Цена 54 коп.

A. Dementyev, A. Pyanov

"Mikhail Kalinin"

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